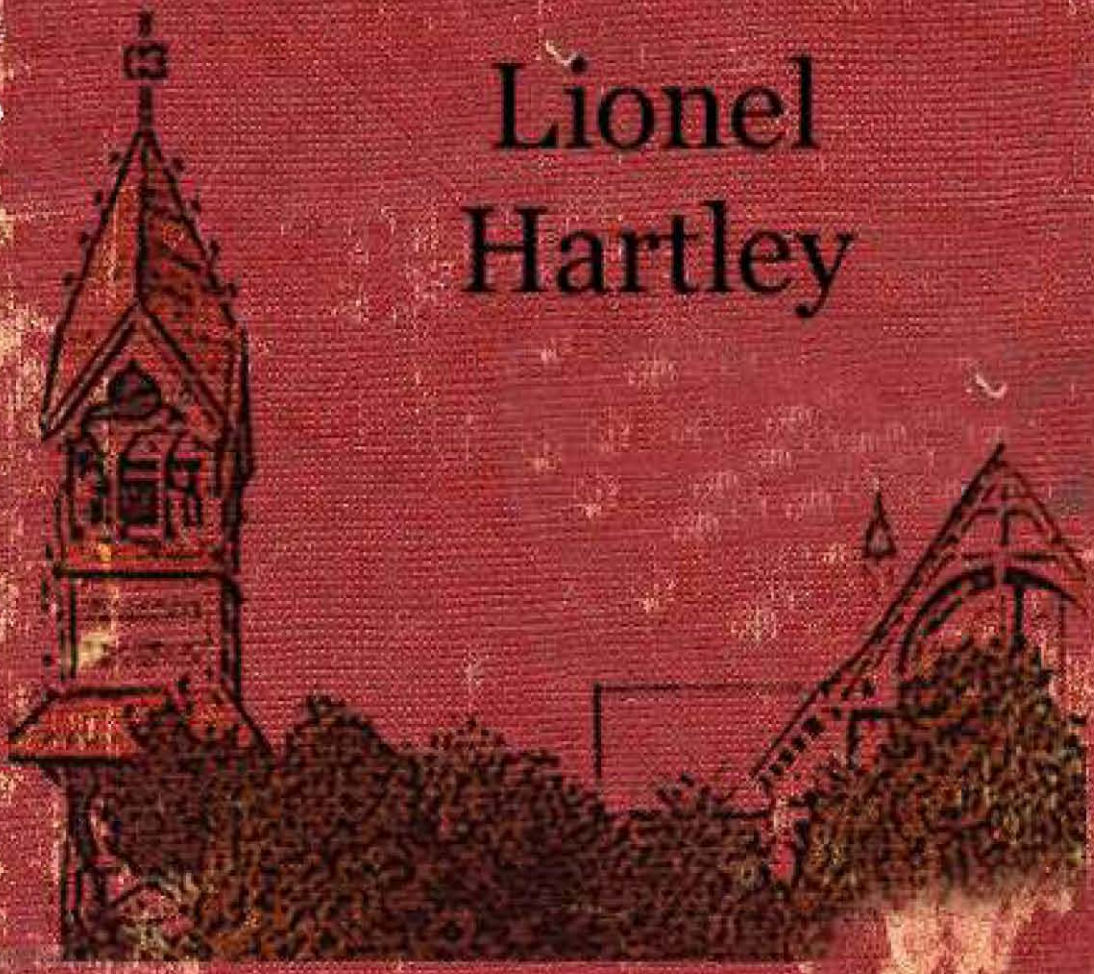
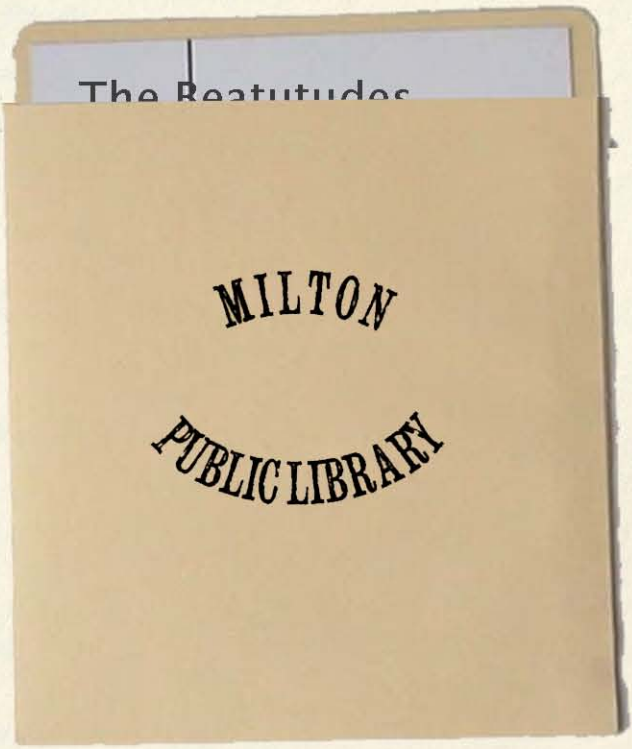
# The Beatitudes

Lionel Hartley

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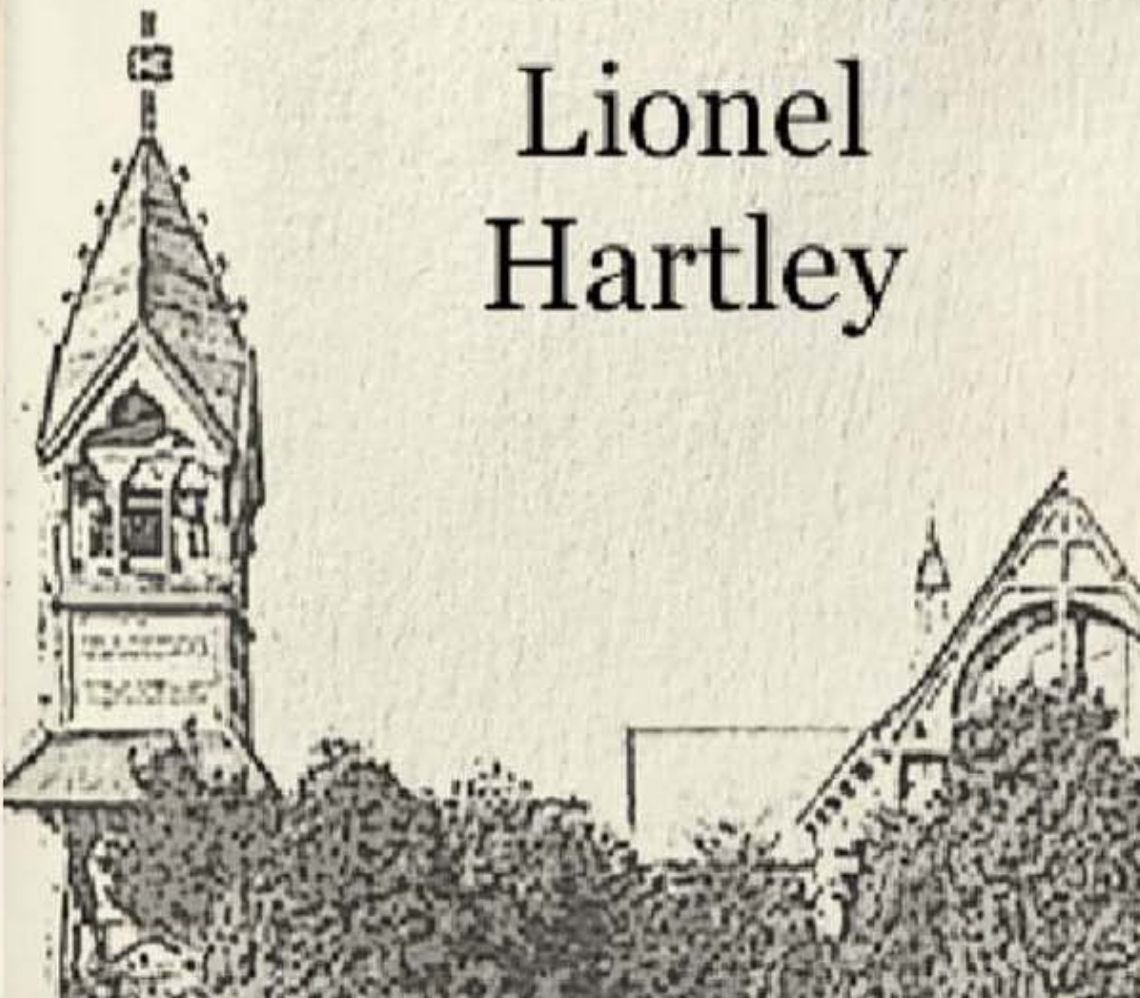

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Lionel D C Hartley
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# Nihil obstat

I certify that Lionel Hartley's "The Beatitudes" is all his own work and as a text on biblical faith and morals it contains no known biblical nor doctrinal errors.

The author, though only in his teens, is a veritable ambulatory concordance.

— Michael Underhill, Dean of Christchurch, 1967

# Imprimatur

This is to certify that "The Beatitudes" by Lionel D C Hartley has been confirmed to be free from doctrinal error.

— Bishop Brian Ashby, Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, Christchurch, MCMLXVII ✠

# Acknowledgements

John Donne wrote, "No man is an island, entire of itself, every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main", and so from my trusty Parker pen to the printed page, this opus has been a community.

Therefore I acknowledge:
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* The Canterbury Public Library for unlimited access to Greek dictionaries, Latin texts and Cruden's Concordance

# The Beatitudes

Matthew 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

# About the Author

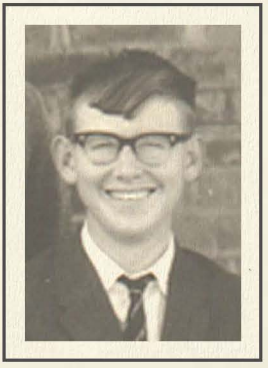
Lionel D C Hartley, although still a teenager, is an Anglican chorister, sides-man, acolyte, and deacon at the Church of Saint Michael and All Angels, Christchurch. He is also a Church of England scholar who believes that the Holy Bible was written for our learning (Romans 15:4) and desires that what he has learned from it be shared.

Other books by this author:

*The Gospel According to Jonah*, Stereo Publications, Christchurch 1965

*Fables Old and Morals New*, Huxley Theatre Press, Christchurch 1966

*A Harmony of Jesus' Parables*, Huxley Theatre Press, Christchurch 1966



# Introduction

During a catechism class at St Michael and All Angels Church (Christchurch) in 1965, I asked about the Beatitudes. The priest, Fr. Philip Baker said that he knew where they were found in the Holy Bible and that they formed the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, but he confessed that didn't really study them seriously enough in seminary to answer my questions and so he encouraged me to investigate them myself.

This book, with all the publishing costs sponsored by the Church of St Michael and All Angels, is the result of that study.

The Beatitudes are a collection of ten succinct statements of Jesus, both brief and yet profound in their brevity.

I have discovered that firstly, the Beatitudes are a persuasive and convincing portrait of Jesus Christ and (by extension) God the Father (Jesus said "... he that hath seen me hath seen the Father...", John 14:9), and further, The Holy Ghost "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26).

Secondly the Beatitudes can be understood as a summary description of the Christian life.

And thirdly the beatitudes can be used as a diagnostic tool for self-examination.

It is with the prayer of your author that you, the reader, will benefit from this book at least as much as I have in researching it.

Most challenging of all are the Thought Questions that end of most of the chapters, put there initially for my benefit, but also there for the reader.

Read on, and be blessed.

Lionel Hartley, 1967.

-ooo-

# What is a Beatitude?

The word "beatitude" comes from the Latin beatus, which means blessed or happy. In the Holy Bible, the Beatitudes are a set of teachings from Jesus Christ at the start of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:3-12. They list ten blessings that describe the core values of God's kingdom.

They invert normal views because Jesus honours people who seem weak by worldly standards.

They provide a wholesome guide for living, showing the inner attitudes and character of a true follower of the Christ.

And each provides a promise of joy, pairing a hard life situation with a divine promise or future reward. For example:
1. Poor in spirit: Knowing that you need God; the reward is heaven.

2. Those who mourn: Feeling deep sorrow; the reward is comfort.

3. The meek: Being gentle and humble; the reward is inheriting the earth.

4. Hunger and thirst for righteousness: Wanting justice and goodness; the reward is being filled.

5. The merciful: Forgiving and kind; the reward is receiving mercy.

6. Pure in heart: Having clean, honest motives; the reward is seeing God.

7. Peacemakers: Stopping fights and building peace; the reward is being called God's children.

8. Persecuted for righteousness: Being mistreated for doing right; the reward is heaven.

9.Recipients of false testimony; the reward is blessing

10. Persecution in general; the reward is in heaven

The New Testament also has many other beatitudes other than those in *The Sermon on the Mount.*

(Matthew 11:6) "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me."

(Matthew 13:16) "But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear."

(Matthew 16:17) "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

(Matthew 24:46) "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing."

(Luke 1:45) "And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things

which were told her from the Lord."

(Luke 7:23) "And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me."

(Luke 11:27-28) "And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. 28) But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."

(Luke 12:37-38) "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. 38) And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants."

(Luke 12:43) "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing."

(Luke 14:14-15) "And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. 15) And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God."

(John 20:29) "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet

have believed."

(Romans 4:7-8) "Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. 8) Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."

(James 1:12) "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."

(James 1:25) "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

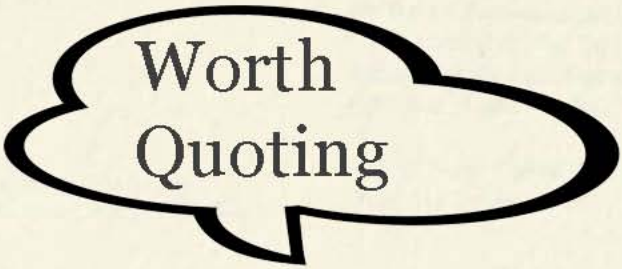
**There are also seven "beatitudes" in Revelation**

Revelation 1:3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

Revelation 14:13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

Revelation 16:15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

Revelation 19:9 And he saith unto me, Write,




"Lord, give me that
pacific mind,
Which spreads thy peace
throughout mankind,
And knits them all in one;
So shall he own me
for his child,
Who all thro' thee
hath reconcil'd,
And take me to his throne."

— Charles Wesley,
Scripture Hymns (1762)

Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

Revelation 20:6 Blessed and holy is he that hath sin the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Revelation 22:7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

Revelation 22:14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

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# Chapter 2 Background to the Beatitudes

In this chapter we will seek to understand why Jesus taught the Beatitudes, who His audience was, and how the historical and biblical background enriches their meaning.

If someone asked you, 'What does God consider constitutes a successful person?' how would you answer?" Many people suggest popularity, pedigree, wealth, influence, education or achievements, however Jesus answered that question very differently.

The Beatitudes are perhaps the most revolutionary words ever spoken because they redefine what it means to be truly blessed.

Before studying each Beatitude, we need to understand the world into which Jesus spoke them.

## Part One The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount

We find the Beatitudes in Matthew's Gospel. Verse 3-12 of Chapter 3.

Saint Matthew presents Jesus as the promised Messiah and King, and throughout the Gospel, Saint Matthew demonstrates that Jesus fulfils Old Testament prophecy.

Therefore the Sermon on the Mount is the

King's description of life in His Kingdom.

The Beatitudes serve as the introduction to this sermon.

Saint Matthew tells us where it was given: (Matthew 5:1-2) "And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: 2) And he opened his mouth, and taught them ... "

The exact location is uncertain, perhaps near Capernaum, tradition associates it with the hills overlooking the Sea of Galilee. Tradition also ascribes the site of the Sermon as an extinct volcano named Karne Hittim. Some commentators suggest that it was a valley, but we need to remember that the content is more important than the countryside.

In Jewish culture Teachers often stood while reading but sat down while teaching. (Luke 4:16 and 20) "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read ... 20) And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him."

Also in Jewish culture the students stood or sat around them and important teaching frequently occurred on hillsides or mountains.

Some commentaries suggest that was a

mountain because throughout Scripture, mountains are places of divine revelation. For example, during the Exodus Moses receives the Law on Mount Sinai, in 1 Kings we read that Elijah hears God's voice on Mount Horeb, and here we have Jesus teaching God's Kingdom presumably from a mountain.

Saint Matthew in his Gospel intentionally presents Jesus as the greater Moses: He is not giving but gratifying (or fulfilling) God's Law.

The context of the Beatitudes is the introduction to the now-famous Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew Chapters 5-7. The Sermon itself is divided into 5 sections"
1. The Beatitudes - Teachings that begin with "blessed." These were meant to comfort suffering believers.

2. New laws - Contrasts the old law of Moses with the new law of Christ. A brief summary of Christian doctrine.

3. Prayer - Instructions on prayer and the proper motives for fasting and offering gifts.

4. Money - Christian attitudes concerning the use of money and reasons to avoid worry.

And 5. Warnings - dangers of false teachers and hypocrisy. Jesus also presents the parable of the wise and foolish builders.

These five parts are actually expansions of the

Kingdom principles espoused in the first part, the Beatitudes.

### Part Two The Audience

Saint Matthew distinguishes between the crowds and the disciples. Jesus primarily teaches His disciples while the crowds listen.

This is significant because the Beatitudes are descriptions of Kingdom citizens rather than requirements for becoming one. They describe transformed lives rather than a checklist for earning God's favour.

The crowd included fishermen, farmers, labourers, women, children, tax collectors, the poor, the sick and even religious leaders.

People came with enormous expectations; many wanted political freedom. However Jesus offered spiritual transformation.

### Part Three The Political Background

Israel lived under Roman occupation and daily life involved heavy taxation, military oppression, social disparity, economic inequality and political instability.

Many Jews expected the Messiah to overthrow Rome, instead, Jesus preached: humility, mercy, peacemaking and love for our enemies. His Kingdom was unlike earthly kingdoms which surprised nearly everyone.

### Part Four - The Religious Background

The religious landscape of the time was diverse.

a) The **Pharisees** were known for strict observance of the Law and oral traditions. They emphasized external obedience and ritual purity. Saint Paul was once a Pharisee -- See Acts 23:6.

b) The **Sadducees** were a priestly aristocracy who controlled the Temple. They accepted only the written Torah and rejected beliefs such as the resurrection. (For example Matthew 22:23)

c) The **Essenes** were a separatist community that withdrew from mainstream society in pursuit of holiness. It is believed that John the Baptist may have spent time in this community.

d) The **Zealots** were nationalists who believed violent resistance against Rome was justified. (For example Simon Zelotes in Luke 6:15)

Jesus' teaching fit neatly into none of these groups, because instead of emphasizing ritual, political revolution, or withdrawal, He focused on the transformation of the human heart.

### Part Five What Does "Blessed" Mean?

Oswald Chambers said, "I thought God's purpose was to make me full of happiness and joy. It is, but it is happiness and joy from God's standpoint, not from mine."

The Greek word translated 'blessed' is

'*makarios*'. In the Latin translation each saying begins with '*beatus*' meaning 'blessed'. It describes a state of well-being that comes from God's favour rather than through changing circumstances. The American theologian James Strong in his concordance defines it as supremely blest, fortunate, well off, blessed and happy.

True happiness, deep-felt satisfaction and joy, was not dependent on their circumstances, but rather on how they saw themselves, and on their relationship with God. True happiness comes not from external circumstances, but from inside us, from humility and self-control, from moral strength, from spiritual awareness, and from service to others.

'*Makarios*' or '*beatus*' is more than happiness.

Happiness often depends on events. Or possessions. Rabbi Hyman Schachtel wrote that happiness is not having what you want, but wanting what you have.

Robert Green Ingersoll wrote, "Happiness is not a reward, it is a consequence."

George Orwell penned, "Men can only be happy when they do not assume that the object of life is happiness".

**Happiness depends upon what happens** whereas biblical blessedness depends on one's relationship with God. Charles Haddon

Spurgeon said, "Have your heart right with Christ, and he will visit you often, and so turn weekdays into Sundays, meals into sacraments, homes into temples, and earth into heaven.

**Part Six The Old Testament Background**

The concept of blessing is deeply rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Examples include:
(Psalm 1:1-3) "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. 2) But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. 3) And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

(Psalm 32:1-2) "A Psalm of David, Maschil. Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. 2) Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile."

(Proverbs 3:13) "Happy [blessed] is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding."

Jesus continues this biblical tradition but applies it in surprising ways. He pronounces God's favour on those whom society often overlooks.

## Part Seven Old Testament Foundations

The Beatitudes did not emerge in isolation. Jesus drew on themes familiar to His listeners.

The Poor: the prophets often spoke of the faithful poor who trusted in God rather than wealth or power.

The Meek: Psalm 37:11 says, "But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace," and Jesus echoes this promise almost word for word.

Mercy: the Hebrew Scriptures repeatedly celebrate God's mercy and call His people to reflect it. For example, Psalm 36:5 "Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds."

Purity: the prophets emphasized inner purity over outward ritual. (2 Samuel 22:27-28) "With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt show thyself unsavoury. 28) And the afflicted people thou wilt save: but thine eyes are upon the haughty, that thou mayest bring them down."

Peace (*shalom*) means wholeness, reconciliation, and flourishing, not merely the absence of conflict. Isaiah 26:3, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto

you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

## Part Eight Why Did Jesus Begin with the Beatitudes?

The Beatitudes form the doorway into the Sermon on the Mount. Because they answer the question, "Who belongs to God's Kingdom?"

Notice that Jesus begins with character rather than commandments. Before discussing prayer, giving, fasting, anger, marriage, or love for enemies later in the sermon, He describes the kind of people His disciples are becoming. The Beatitudes are not random sayings; they provide the foundation for everything that follows in the sermon.

## Part Nine Common Misunderstandings

Misunderstanding 1: The Beatitudes are steps to earn salvation. In reality they describe the character of those who belong to God's Kingdom.

Misunderstanding 2: They are impossible ideals. In reality they portray the life God forms in believers through His grace and the working of the Holy Spirit.

Misunderstanding 3: They apply only in Heaven. In reality they are meant to shape Christian life now while pointing toward the future fulfilment of God's Kingdom.

Misunderstanding 4: They describe weakness. In reality Jesus presents humility, mercy, and peacemaking as marks of spiritual strength. Sir William Gurney Benham said that "Meekness is not weakness".

Meekness is often demonstrated by those who are brave enough to give soft answers to rough questions ("A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger." Proverbs 15:1) One of the strongest characters in the Holy Bible was Moses, and of him it was said, "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3).

**Thought questions:**

1. Why do you think Jesus began the Sermon on the Mount with blessings rather than commands?

2. Which aspect of the first-century background helps you understand the Beatitudes more clearly?

3. How did Jesus' vision of God's Kingdom differ from the expectations of many people in His day?

4. What does the biblical idea of being "blessed" add to your understanding of the Christian life?

5. In what ways do modern ideas of success differ from the values Jesus presents in the Beatitudes?

In conclusion, the Beatitudes cannot be understood apart from their context. They were spoken by the promised Messiah at the beginning of His greatest recorded sermon to disciples living under Roman rule in a culture shaped by the Old Testament to redefine what it means to live under God's reign in His kingdom.

Instead of celebrating power, prestige, and self-sufficiency, Jesus declared blessed those who are humble, merciful, pure in heart, and committed to peace. His teaching challenged first-century assumptions and continues to challenge ours today.

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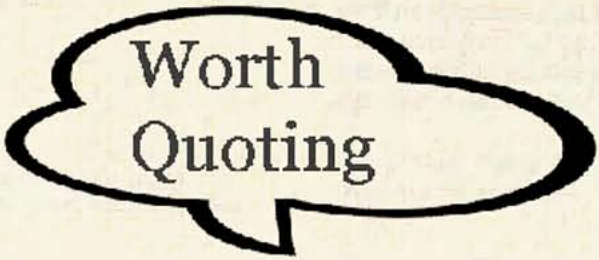


Abraham Lincoln often said the Sermon on the Mount contained the core of all true law and justice.

— John Nicolay
(Abraham Lincoln's private secretary)

# Chapter 3 Blessed are the Poor in Spirit

(Matthew 5:3) "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

The Sermon on the Mount begins with a surprising statement because Jesus does not begin with strength, knowledge, holiness, or success; He begins with poverty.

This is neither physical poverty nor emotional weakness, but poverty of spirit. This first Beatitude is the foundation for everything else Jesus teaches in this sermon. Without understanding it, the remaining Beatitudes lose much of their meaning.

The Beatitudes seem to form a progression. Spiritual poverty leads to mourning over sin, which leads to meekness, hunger for righteousness, mercy, purity of heart, peacemaking, and perseverance under persecution.

**Part One What Does "Poor in Spirit" Mean?**

The Greek word for "poor" is '*ptochos*'. It does not simply mean someone with little money; it actually describes a beggar. someone completely dependent upon another; someone who has absolutely nothing.

Jesus intentionally chose the strongest

possible word.

Spiritual poverty means that I have nothing to offer God and is the opposite of spiritual pride. I cannot save myself, I cannot earn God's favour, I cannot overcome sin by my own strength and I desperately need God's grace.

This attitude is seen throughout Scripture.

When the Prophet Isaiah encountered God's holiness he did not boast, he confessed, "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." (Isaiah 6:5)

Saint Peter, after the miraculous catch of fish, saw his spiritual poverty. "When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8).

The Tax Collector in the temple: "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). And Jesus said, "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Vs 14).

## Part Two Spiritual Poverty versus Self-righteousness

Jesus continually opposed religious pride. "Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. 11) The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. 12) I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. 13) And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. 14) I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:10-14)

The Pharisees believed, "I obey."... "I fast."... "I tithe."... "I deserve God's approval" and yet Jesus criticized them more than anyone else. Because pride blinds people to their need for grace. However, because they knew they needed mercy, prostitutes, tax collectors and 'sinners' often would be eligible to enter God's kingdom before religious leaders.

Spiritual poverty is not low self-esteem, it is accurate self-assessment before a holy God.

Our self esteem is based on the fact that we were created in God's image: "God said, Let us

make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. 28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Genesis 1:26-28).

Our self esteem is also based on the fact that we are important to God: "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. 2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. 3 Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. 4 For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. 5 Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it (Psalm 139:1-6). And, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. 30 But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:29-31)

## Part Three Old Testament Background

Jesus drew his illustrations for the sermon from the Old Testament:

(Psalm 34:18) "The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit."

(Psalm 51:17) "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

(Isaiah 57:15) "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

(Isaiah 66:2) "For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

## Part Four Why is This Beatitude First?

Everything begins with humility. Consider the sequence:

1. Poor in spirit
2. Mourning
3. Meekness
4. Hunger for righteousness
5. Mercy
6. Purity

7. Peacemaking
8. Endurance

Without spiritual poverty we never mourn sin, and without mourning we never become meek and without meekness we will never hunger for righteousness.

The gospel cannot be received by someone who is convinced he or she has no need for it.

**Part Five "For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven"**

Notice both the certainty and immediacy in this promise. Not maybe, someday, bus 'is (now) the Kingdom. The kingdom belongs now to those who trust Christ.

Eternal life does not begin with our resurrection it begins with our conversion. Jesus said, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath (has now) eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:54). "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:12).

This means forgiveness, reconciliation with God, adoption into God's family, eternal life (beginning now) and citizenship in heaven, all beginning with humility.

The proud attempt to earn entrance, whereas the poor in spirit receive it as a gift.

**Part Six Examples from Scripture**

The closer God's servants came to Him, the

more aware they became of His holiness and their dependence on His grace.

Moses: although he led Israel, he remained humble. Of him it was said, "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3).

David: after his sin with Bathsheba, he confessed (Psalm 51) instead of defending himself.

The Blessed Virgin Mary said, "For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed" (Luke 1:48)

Saint Paul: near the end of his life he described himself by saying, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15).

**Part Seven Applications**

1. Salvation: nobody enters heaven through personal goodness because salvation begins when we admit our need for Christ. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9) Not of works, lest any man should boast" Ephesians 2:8-9).

2. Prayer: the poor in spirit pray differently because instead of demanding from God, they come with dependence and his or her prayer

becomes an expression of trust rather than self-sufficiency.

3. Worship: true worship flows from gratitude because those who know how much they have been forgiven worship deeply.

4. Gratitude: gratitude is seeing a sunset and thanking the Artist. The beatitude of gratitude is an attitude. Gratitude consists of more than the commonplace, hence gratitude is no platitude. Gratitude seeks all strata of society and therefore is no platitude in servitude. Gratitude is a deliberate act of precision, an exactitude in giving. Gratitude builds relationships to prevent solitude. In summary then, the primary beatitude is an attitude of gratitude which is no platitude in servitude, but an exactitude which prevents solitude.

5. Relationships: humility changes how we treat others. A spiritually poor person is: patient, forgiving, teachable compassionate and they depend on God's mercy.

6. Ministry: God often works through those who know their weakness. Saint Paul wrote "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10) Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for

when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

Our admitted weakness surrendered to God becomes the public platform on which His strength is displayed.

**Thought Questions**

1. Do I rely more on my achievements than on God's grace?

2. When I pray, do I come with humility or entitlement?

3. Am I teachable, or do I resist correction?

4. Do I compare myself with others or measure myself against God's holiness?

5. In what areas of my life do I need to acknowledge greater dependence on God?

In summary, Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount by overturning worldly expectations. The doorway into God's kingdom is not self-confidence but humble dependence. To be "poor in spirit" is to recognize that we stand before God empty-handed, unable to earn His favour, and entirely reliant on His mercy. Such humility is not the end of the Christian life-it is the beginning of it.

When we acknowledge our spiritual poverty, we become open to God's grace, forgiveness, and transforming power. The paradox of the Beatitude is that those who admit they have

nothing to offer God receive everything He offers through Christ.

The Kingdom of Heaven belongs not to the self-sufficient, but to those who come before God with humble hearts, trusting in His grace alone.

(Matthew 5:3) "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

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# Chapter 4 Blessed Are Those Who Mourn

Godly mourning leads to Godly comfort.

Beatitude 2 (Matthew 5:4) "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."

The Beatitudes describe the character of those who belong to God's kingdom. They are not isolated sayings but form a spiritual progression. The first Beatitude says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.". The person who recognizes his or her spiritual poverty naturally comes to the second Beatitude which begins, "Blessed are those who mourn".

Jesus is not speaking primarily about mourning the death of a loved one or the ordinary sorrows of life, although God certainly comforts those who grieve. Here, He speaks also of a deeper mourning, a sorrow over sin, brokenness, and separation from God.

This mourning is not just a hopeless despair nor is it a state of sorrow over the death or departure of a loved one but a sorrowfulness that leads to repentance and restoration. Godly mourning leads to Godly comfort.

**Part One Understanding the word "Blessed" in the second Beatitude.**

As in the first Beatitude, "blessed" is referring to a state of divine favour and joy that comes from God.

The world's idea of happiness is based on avoiding pain. Jesus teaches that there is a kind of sorrow that leads to true blessing. The world says to ignore your failures, rationalise or excuse your sins, follow your feelings. and avoid guilt. Jesus says, "Blessed are those who mourn".

The paradox is that sorrow, rightly directed, becomes a pathway to finding comfort.

**Part Two What does it mean to mourn?**

The Greek word translated "mourn" (*penthem*) refers to deep grief, often used for mourning the loss of a loved one. It describes heartfelt sorrow rather than superficial regret.

In this Beatitude, mourning includes grieving over personal sin, grieving over having offended the one we love (God), grieving over the sins of our local neighbourhood, grieving over the fallen state of the world, and longing for God's righteousness to prevail.

This is not self-pity or regret over consequences alone. It is grief because sin offends God and damages His creation.

In 2 Corinthians 7:10 Saint Paul distinguishes two kinds of sorrow: "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be

repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."

Worldly sorrow says, "I'm sorry I got caught," whereas Godly sorrow says, "I have sinned against God."

David said in Psalm 51:3-4, "For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. 4) Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest."

**Part Three Mourning Over Personal Sin**

The Bible gives many examples of people who mourned over their sins.

We have already mentioned David, who after his sin with Bathsheba, prayed in Psalm 51, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned..." (Verse 4). He did not minimize his guilt but confessed it honestly and sought God's mercy. Although there were still consequences, David's mourning led to restoration.

Saint Peter, after denying Jesus three times, Matthew 26:75 records, "And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly." Saint Peter's tears reflected genuine repentance and his mourning prepared him for restoration and a future mission.

The Prodigal Son, When he realized his condition, he said, (Luke 15:18, 21) "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee ... 21) And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." His sorrow led him back to his father. May ours lead us to our Heavenly Father. Repentance always begins with honest recognition of sin.

**Part Four Mourning Over the World's Brokenness**

Followers of Christ also mourn over the suffering caused by sin in the world. We grieve because of: injustice, oppression, dishonesty, violence, greed, hatred, broken families, poverty, tyranny, cruelty, moral corruption, etc.

Jesus Himself wept. He wept over Jerusalem because its people rejected God's invitation, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" (Luke 13:34).

Jesus wept at Lazarus's tomb, sharing in human sorrow even though He knew He would raise Lazarus, "When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which

came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, 34) And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. 35) Jesus wept. 36) Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!" (John 11:33-36).

Godly mourning includes repentance, compassion for others and a longing for God's kingdom to be fully revealed (See Matthew 6:10; Luke 11:2).

**Part Five The Promise, "They Shall Be Comforted"**

This is one of the greatest promises in Scripture. Jesus does not say they might or may be comforted. He says they shall or will be comforted. God doesn't comfort us to make us comfortable but to make us comforters. "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; 4) Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

God comforts His people in several ways.
a) Through forgiveness. When we confess our sins, God forgives. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Forgiveness brings peace and comfort.

b) Through the Holy Ghost (Holy Spirit). Jesus

called the Holy Spirit the Comforter (or Helper). John 14:16, 26, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;" ... 26) "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

The Holy Spirit assures believers of God's presence, He strengthens them in weakness, and He brings them hope in times of sorrow and mourning.

c) Through God's promises. "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Corinthians 1:20). God's promises remind believers that suffering and sin will not have the final word and His promises sustain those who trust in Him.

d) Through the assurances of eternity. Revelation 21:4, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." One day mourning itself will end

**Part Six Mourning and Repentance**

Biblical repentance involves more than feeling guilty. It includes recognizing sin, confessing it,

turning away from it (this is what the word 'repent' means), trusting in God's grace to forgive and then walking in obedience. True mourning produces transformation. For example, Judas experienced regret whereas Saint Peter experienced repentance. For Judas this lead to destruction (Matthew 27:5, "And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself." For Saint Peter this led to restoration (John 21:16) "... Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep." The difference was turning (repenting) toward Christ.

**Part Seven Practical Applications**

a) Examine your heart and ask God to reveal areas where repentance is needed. (Psalm 139:23-24) "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: 24) And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

b) Develop a sensitivity to sin. Modern culture often normalizes sin. Christians should not become indifferent. The more righteous he or she becomes, the greater appreciation he or she has for God's law and the more sensitive he or she will become to his or her own corruption. For example Saint Paul's words in Romans 7, written about twenty years into his conversion,

reflect his own growing sensitivity to sin, leading to his famous utterance: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? 25) I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord ..." (Romans 7:24-25). A tender conscience is a gift from God. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (Romans 6:12).

c) Comfort others. Those who have experienced God's comfort are called to comfort others. As Saint Paul writes that God comforts us so that we may comfort those in any trouble (see 2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

d) Maintain hope. This Beatitude assures us that Christian mourning is never without hope. Because Christ is risen, sorrow does not have the final word. Even in grief, believers can trust God's promises. 1 Thessalonians 4:13, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, ... that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." Romans 5:1-2, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: 2) By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

Emily Dickinson wrote, "Hope is the thing with feathers / That perches in the soul / And sings the tune without the words / And never stops at

all".

## Part Eight Common Misunderstandings

This Beatitude does not teach constant sadness, pessimism, depression as a virtue or badge of honour, suppressing our emotions nor living without joy. Instead, it teaches sincere sorrow over sin and brokenness that leads to repentance, healing, and hope. Likewise, Jesus does not encourage mourning for its own sake. The blessing lies in God's response, which is His forgiveness, comfort, and restoration.

## Thought Questions

1. Do I recognize the seriousness of sin in my own life?

2. When I fail, do I make excuses or confess honestly?

3. Does grief or anger over the brokenness of the world move me to prayer and action?

4. Have I experienced God's comfort through forgiveness?

5. How can I extend God's comfort to someone who is grieving or struggling?

In summary, the second Beatitude reveals that God's kingdom is built on truth, not denial. Those who recognize their spiritual poverty begin to mourn, not because they are without hope, but because they see sin as God sees it. Such mourning opens our heart to repentance,

and repentance opens the path to God's comfort.

Jesus promises that those who mourn in this way will not remain in sorrow forever. They receive forgiveness through Christ, strength through the Holy Spirit, encouragement through God's Word, and the hope of a future in which every tear will be wiped away.

The progression of the Beatitudes is clear: the spiritually poor recognize their need for God, those who mourn grieve over sin and the world's brokenness, and they are then prepared to become meek, submitting their lives to God's will. In our next chapter we will look at meekness (Matthew 5:5, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth").

This is the path of discipleship: humility, repentance, transformation, and ultimately, joy in the presence of God now and forever.

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# Chapter 5 Blessed are the Meek

(Matthew 5:5) "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

**Part One The Context**

The Beatitudes challenge our ordinary understanding of blessing.

The world says, "Blessed are the rich"; Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." (Matthew 5:3) The world says, "Blessed are the happy"; Jesus says, "Blessed are they that mourn" (Matthew 5:4)

The world says, "Blessed are the powerful"; Jesus says, "Blessed are the meek" (Matthew 5:5)

The kingdom of God turns many of our upside down values the right way up..

The Beatitudes are not simply promises that Christians will have comfortable lives but rather they describe people whose lives are attuned with the precepts of God's kingdom.

And in Matthew 5:5, Jesus tells the meek that they shall have a future that the world neither understands nor recognizes, "They shall inherit the earth.".

**Part Two. What Is Biblical Meekness?**

Meekness is like an undergarment that ought to be worn but never to be seen.

a) To understand Jesus' statement, we must understand the word 'meek,.

In ordinary English, meekness can sometimes mean timid, passive, submissive, or easily dominated. Only yesterday I was reminded of this when someone said to me, "It says that inherit the earth, but inheritance would be okay if the meek could be depended upon to stay that way."

Samuel Butler observed, "I really do not see much use in exalting the humble and the meek; they do not remain humble and meek long when they are exalted."

"...whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Matthew 23:12).

However ordinary English does not accurately reflect the biblical idea of meekness.

Biblical meekness involves humility, gentleness, self-control, and submission to God.

"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5:6). True meekness is only made possible through the Holy Ghost: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23) Meekness,

temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23).

A meek person does not have to prove his or her superiority, be the victor in every argument nor retaliate against every insult.

Thomas a' Kempis wrote, "He is not truly patient who will suffer only as much as he pleases or from whom he pleases. A truly patient man gives no heed from whom he suffers, whether from his superior or from his equal or from someone below him".

b) Meekness is not weakness.

That phrase is attributed to Sir William Gurney Benham

Consider a horse. In the Canterbury Museum in Christchurch there is a reproduction of an early Christchurch Street with a life-sized model (or taxidermy) of a horse. When I first stood beside it I was amazed at the size of it compared to me (then a child). A powerful horse can have enormous strength. But when that strength is brought under control and directed by its rider, the horse becomes useful. Its strength has not disappeared; it has been harnessed, reined in and disciplined. Likewise, Christian meekness does not mean that a person has no strength. It means that his or her strength is harnessed, reined in, disciplined and brought under God's authority.

A meek person can say, "I could respond in anger, but I choose patience", or "I could retaliate, but I choose forgiveness" or "I could humiliate you, but I choose gentleness" or "I could insist on my rights, but I choose to trust God" or maybe "I could use my position for myself, but I will use it to serve others." That is not weakness; that is spiritual strength.

A. W. Tozer in his book 'The Pursuit of God' wrote, "The meek man is not a human mouse afflicted with a sense of his own inferiority. Rather, he may be in his moral life as bold as a lion and as strong as Samson; but he has stopped being fooled about himself. He has accepted God's estimate of his own life. He knows he is as weak and helpless as God has declared him to be, but paradoxically, he knows at the same time that he is, in the sight of God, more important than angels. ... He knows well that the world will never see him as God sees him and he has stopped caring."

**Part Three A Biblical Picture of Meekness**

Numbers 12:3 reads, "(Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.)"

Now you may be thinking, "Now hang on a minute, the book of Numbers is traditionally attributed to Moses, so was he writing about himself? That doesn't sound like 'meek' to me."

However, although final form is possibly due to

a later priestly editing, the actual stories recorded in the Pentateuch (the first five books in the Holy Bible) attests to the humility and meekness of Moses. Furthermore, the New Testament also recognises this, "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; 25) Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Hebrews 11:24-25).

Moses was not a weak man. He confronted Pharaoh, the most powerful ruler in Egypt and declared God's command. He led Israel out of slavery. He confronted rebellion, exercised exceptional leadership and yet Scripture describes him as meek.

Meekness does not mean the absence of authority; Moses possessed authority, but that authority was ultimately understood as belonging to God.

When Moses needed to confront evil, he confronted it. When he needed to lead, he led. When he needed to speak, he spoke. But he was never driven by selfish ambition.

This teaches us that meekness does not stifle leadership; meekness sublimates it.

A meek leader does not ask, "How can I make the people serve me?", rather "How can I serve the people God has entrusted to me?"

A job description for a meek servant can be found in Philippians 2:3-4, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. 4) Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

**Part Four Jesus Himself is the Perfect Example**

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3) For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds" (Hebrews 12:2-3).

Undoubtedly, the greatest example of biblical meekness is Jesus the Christ.

Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30) For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:29-30).

Jesus was not weak: He confronted religious hypocrisy, drove the money-changers from the temple, He spoke boldly against injustice, He stood unfazed before Pilate, He endured false accusations and yet, when He was arrested and crucified, He did not respond with vengeance.

Jesus had power, but He chose submission to the Father's will.

This is the ambiguity of Christian meekness: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6) Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7) But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8) And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:5-8)

Jesus had the power to destroy His enemies, yet He prayed for forgiveness for them.

He had the authority to demand kudos, honour and prestige, yet He washed His disciples' feet.

He was entitled to glory, yet He embraced the cross. "... He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth" (Acts 8:32)

Therefore, when Jesus says, "Blessed are the meek," He is not merely espousing to us some abstract moral principle, He is inviting us to become like Him.

**Part Five Meekness and Anger**

One of the most clear-cut proofs of meekness is how we handle anger.

Anger itself is not necessarily sinful. Ephesians

4:26-27 says, "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: 27) Neither give place to the devil." So it's okay to be angry, and there are things that should anger us, things like abuse, cruelty, dishonesty, violence, exploitation, hatred, injustice, and oppression.

The problem is that human anger easily becomes selfish or destructive anger, maybe because our pride has been wounded, someone disagrees with or criticizes us, or maybe someone insults us, does not respect us or possibly takes credit for our hard work. Human anger tells us that we must float revenge and fight back.

Meekness teaches us to pause and ask, "Who is controlling me right now? Is it God, or am I being controlled by my anger?"

Proverbs 16:32 says, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

We have a warning from Saint Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:33 about an angry tongue, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man" (Matthew 15:11).

And from Saint Luke, "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that

which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh" (Luke 6:45).

Meekness is demonstrated when the angry tongue becomes sanctified and is used to bless, rather than curse.

(Ephesians 4:29) "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."

(Colossians 3:8) "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth."

(James 3:10) "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be."

(Romans 10:9-10) "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10) For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

The Holy Bible presents temperance or self-control as a form of strength and this reflects the growth and development of a fruit of a spirit-led life, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness,

faith, 23) Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23).

**Part Six Meekness Is Not Passive**

This point is extremely important because some people misunderstand Christianity and think meekness means allowing injustice to continue.

Biblical meekness does not mean to never speak up or say 'no.'

Biblical meekness does not mean to never confront wrongdoing."

Biblical meekness does not mean to never establish boundaries and allow anyone to abuse you."

Jesus Himself confronted wrongdoing. Saint Paul confronted serious problems in the early church. The prophets confronted kings and nations.

Christian meekness can speak truth, but without hatred or one-up-man-ship. It can confront deception or inappropriate behaviour without becoming cruel. It can say 'no' without becoming vindictive or accusative and it can defend or advocate for someone without becoming consumed by revenge, vengeance or vindictiveness. The measure is not what the meek person does, but why and how they do it.

God said, "To me belongeth vengeance, and recompense" (Deuteronomy 32:35).

Saint Paul wrote, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Romans 12:19).

**Part Seven "For They Shall Inherit the Earth."**

Now we come to the promise. Jesus says, "...for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5).

To understand what this means is important to recognize the Old Testament background.

This language recalls Psalm 37: "For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. 11) But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace"(Psalm 37:10-11).

Psalm 37 contrasts the wicked and the righteous. The wicked may appear to prosper; they may appear powerful; they may appear to control everything, but their success is temporary.

The righteous are called to trust God. The promise of inheritance points to God's ultimate establishment of His kingdom and His purposes. Jesus therefore gives the meek a tremendous promise that the future does not belong ultimately to the violent, the arrogant, or the proud, but to God. Those who belong to God will share in what God establishes.

The meek may not appear powerful today as

they may be overlooked, mocked, taken advantage of. and they may refuse the methods of worldly ambition, but Jesus says not judge the final outcome by the present circumstances. God sees, remembers and will establish His kingdom, which the meek shall inherit because God gives the inheritance as a promise. "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, 14) Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory" (Ephesians 1:13-14).

## Part Eight What Does Meekness Look Like in Everyday Life?

Let us bring this teaching really close to home and into practical situations.

a) In the family meekness means refusing to make every disagreement a battle for control. It means listening, apologizing and choosing reconciliation over winning.

b) At work meekness means not constantly seeking recognition. We can work hard without needing everyone to praise us, we can correct a mistake without humiliating the person who made it and we can receive criticism without immediately becoming defensive.

b) In relationships meekness means controlling our words because not every thought needs to

be spoken, not every insult requires a response and not every disagreement requires a victory.

c) In leadership meekness means using authority to govern and serve rather than dominate or dictate. The question is not, "How much power do I have?" but "How can I use whatever power I possess for the good of others?"

d) In conflict, meekness means refusing revenge, seeking justice without hatred, telling the truth without cruelty or deception and it means leaving room for God to be the judge, "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: 38) Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:37-38).

**Part Nine Why the earth? Why not heaven?**

This is answered by Saint John in Revelation 3:12, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name."

The final home of the saved will be earth ("...the meek ... shall inherit the earth"). But as my definition of Heaven is "where God lives," the New Earth will also be a (new) Heaven for us.

(Revelation 21:3) "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."

(Revelation 21:1-2) "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. 2) And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

## Part Ten. The Great Paradox

Matthew 5:5 contains one of the great contradictions of the Christian faith. The world says to take and Jesus says to receive. The world says to fight for your position; Jesus says to Trust God and you will inherit it. The world says to make yourself great whereas Jesus says to become a servant. The world says control everything but Jesus says to surrender yourself to God. And then Jesus gives this extraordinary astonishing amazing promise: "The meek... shall inherit the earth".

Why? Because God's kingdom is not built

according to the world's system of domination. The Christian does not need to grasp for everything because the Christian trusts the Christ who gives everything, including the inheritance.

## Part Eleven Becoming Meek

So how do we become meek? We begin by looking at Jesus (Hebrews 12:2), we learn to surrender our pride Mark 7:22-23), we learn to control our anger (Ephesians 4:26), we learn to listen (Luke 6:47-49), we learn to forgive (Matthew 6:15), we learn to speak truth without hatred (Ephesians 4:25), we learn to serve rather than dominate (Matthew 20:27), we learn to trust God when we are mistreated (Proverbs 3:5) and above all, we learn that our security does not depend upon controlling the world because God is in control.

The meek person can therefore live with peace because they do not have to win every battle; they do not have to answer every insult, they do not have to prove their worth, they get their identity in Christ and they can trust God..

## Thought Questions

1. How does the example of Jesus speak to you about how we should understand meekness and how we you ought to live?

2. What stands out to you about how Jesus demonstrated meekness?

3. How do you think meekness being demonstrated would be a witness to the Christ?

4. If biblical meekness is applied in your own life, how might it affect your home life, church, work or your neighbours, etc.?

5. Are there particular moments or situations where you find it difficult to exercise meekness?

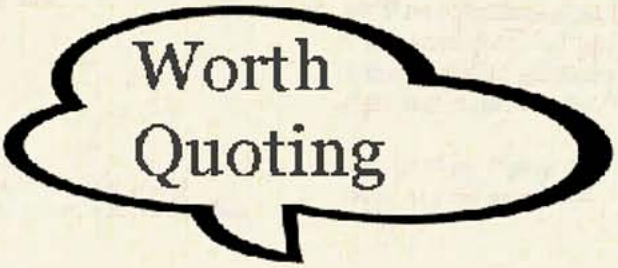
6. What is the difference between meekness and being like a doormat with people walking over you?

In conclusion, we see that the world may confuse meekness with weakness, but Jesus does not.

Jesus sees the person who refuses revenge, He sees the person who chooses patience, He sees the person who serves when nobody applauds, He sees the person who remains gentle despite having the power to retaliate, He sees the person who trusts God rather than grasping for control, and to them Jesus makes a promise, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

The meek are not the forgotten people of God's kingdom; they are its heirs. Their inheritance does not ultimately come from human approval, wealth, influence, or power, it comes from God.

So let us not be afraid of meekness nor confuse gentleness with weakness or humility with




In Shakespear's Henry VI, Part 2 (Act 2, Scene 1), King Henry VI directly quotes the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:9) while trying to calm his fighting nobles:

"I prithee, peace, good queen, and whet not on these furious peers; / For blessed are the peacemakers on earth."

cowardice. Let us ask God to give us the strength to control our strength, courage to control our anger, and the humility to place our lives completely in His hands.

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# Chapter 6 Hungry and Thirsty for Righteousness

(Matthew 5:6) "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

## Part One A Question of Appetite

Human beings are creatures of appetite. We do not merely think; we want. We hunger for acceptance, security, pleasure, achievement, recognition, intimacy, control, and meaning. Much of human life can be understood as an attempt to satisfy our appetites. Sin began as a result of appetite when Satan (then Lucifer) in Heaven had an appetite for greatness, desiring to be "Like the most High (Isaiah 14:13-15). Eve had an appetite for fruit that was good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit (Genesis 3:6). Jesus' first temptation in the wilderness (Matthew 4:3) was "when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."

Jesus does not begin Matthew 5:6 by condemning appetite itself. Instead, he redirects it: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

It is not a question on whether we hunger as

everyone hungers for something. The question is, "What do we hunger for most of all?"

Jesus' language is passionate. He does not say, "Blessed are those who have a passing interest in righteousness or who prefer righteousness when it is convenient or even those who occasionally admire goodness. He describes people for whom righteousness has become as vital as food and water are to life.

Therefore Matthew 5:6 speaks about desire (What does the heart deeply want?), righteousness (What does it mean to be right with God and live rightly?), grace (Who can satisfy this otherwise impossible hunger?), transformation (What kind of life grows from this spiritual appetite?) and hope (When and how will God's people finally be filled?).

Matthew 5:6 is both a comfort and a challenge.. It comforts us because Jesus promises a blessing to people who are still hungry. It challenges us because our appetites reveal what we truly value in life, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21 see also Luke 12:34).

## Part Two The Setting: Matthew 5 and the Beatitudes

Matthew 5 opens with Jesus going up a mountain, sitting down, and teaching his disciples before the gathered crowds. The setting reminds me of God instructing Moses

and his receiving God's law on Mount Sinai, but Jesus is not repeating the Ten Commandments, he is expanding and personalising them, teaching with personal authority.

Matthew chapters 5-7 describe life under God's reign highlighting the character, conduct, devotion, relationships, priorities, and hope of Jesus' disciples.

The first four Beatitudes form a meaningful progression as the poor in spirit recognize their spiritual bankruptcy, those who mourn grieve over sin and its effects, the meek abandon self-assertion and submit themselves to God and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness desire the rightness they cannot produce by themselves (See Isaiah 64:6).

The movement is from recognition to sorrow, from surrender to desire. A person who believes he is already spiritually rich will not seek help. A person who does not mourn sin will not long for a holy character. A person committed to self-rule will not submit to God. Hunger for righteousness grows in an atmosphere prepared by poverty of spirit, mourning, and meekness.

The Beatitude sequence shows something of the fruit of this transformed life: mercy, purity of heart, peacemaking, and endurance under persecution.

## Part Three: The Intense Desire of Hunger and Thirst

Readers of this generation with reliable access to food and clean water can mimimise Jesus' metaphor. In the ancient world, hunger and thirst mean life and death. Food supplies were not very secure, work was physically demanding, and drought could devastate entire communities.

Mentioning both hunger and thirst to communicate total reliance upon sustenance. Food and water are not optional luxuries. They sustain life.

Righteousness is not presented as one option among many, it is essential to Christian life and development..

Hunger indicates both living life and lacking life because a cadaver does not become hungry and hunger is evidence of the existence of life (See Mark 5:41-43). Spiritually, a desire for righteousness may therefore be evidence that God is already at work in the believer's life.

But hunger also indicates a lack. Hungry people know they have not yet been filled. The person Jesus blesses does not say, "I am full of my righteousness." That person says, "I need God's righteousness." One test is found in Isaiah 32:17, "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." Quietness

because the believer remains dependent and still hungry and assurance for ever because the hunger reflects God's free gift.

We are what we eat; what we repeatedly consume, desire, admire, imagine, and pursue changes us.

If you feed on anger you become angry, if you feed on hatred you become hateful and if you feed on resentment you become resentful. If you feed on seeking approval you will be dependent on the recognition and praise of others.

On the other hand, if you feed on love you will become more loving. If you often read the Holy Bible, attend Mass and other opportunities for worship, if you pray honestly and sincerely, practice acts of mercy, confess sin, and wisely choose your company and friendships you will cultivate an appetite for righteousness.

We can actually feed on Jesus and His example because He claimed, "... I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:35, see also John 6:48).

**Part Four What Is Righteousness?**

The key to appreciating the import of Matthew 5:6 is through understanding the meaning of righteousness. In Scripture, righteousness is a complex concept that includes being in a right

relationship with God, living according to God's will, displaying and living in fidelity, and seeking to do what is right all things including in human relationships and society.

Although we all need a right relationship with our Creator, God's standard is not achievable in our own strength because God is holy and we are sinful human beings.

Genesis 1:26 says, 'And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.'

I would like to suggest that we are actually made in Adam's image. Adam was made in God's image (Genesis 1:26) and at the Fall (Genesis 3:6) Sin (the image of Satan) entered Adam.

In Genesis 5:1 & 3 we read, 'This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him ... And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth.' So by creation Adam was made in God's image and by procreation we have been made in Adam's image.

I would like to suggest the following formula to

understand Adam's image. GI+S =AI (God's image plus Sin equals Adam's image). This means that to restore the image of God in His creation (man), sin needs to be removed. Adam's image less sin equals God's image. However, because sin is part of our nature (Adam's image) we cannot, of ourselves, remove sin and become again like God's image.

Satan's great lie to Eve suggested that she was not already in God's image and that partaking of the fruit would make her like God. In fact, the entering of sin did the opposite, it made her less God-like. In order for us to become God-like we need to be re-created, or born again. Something we cannot do for ourselves. However, God is willing to take the sin part of our nature and, with our permission (and only with our permission) start us on the journey of his re-creating us anew. When we invite him to change our image we acknowledge that He has already made provision through His Son Jesus.

God does this in several stages. When we confess our sinfulness he regards us as if we had been created and not procreated. He gives us a clean slate to work from (we call this Justification). We are born again, as if procreated as a newborn infant without sin. But as procreated beings, we still bear the image of Adam and so we are still inclined toward sin. So God continues to nurture us on to wholeness in Him for the remainder of our earthly life (we

call this Sanctification). On the great resurrection day, God will finalise this change by re-creating us in His image (We call this Glorification).

The spiritually hungry person stops relying on self-righteousness and looks to God's mercy. The hunger is answered not by boasting in personal goodness, but by receiving righteousness as God's gift.

Righteousness is conformity to God's good character and will. It involves becoming the kind of person who increasingly loves rather than uses other people, tells the truth rather than fudging it, shows mercy rather than nurturing or harbouring revenge, practices purity rather than secretly feeding the lusts of the flesh, makes peace rather than stirring up conflict, seeks God's approval rather than performing acts of piety and alms-giving to be seen of men (Matthew 6:2) and trusts god unreservedly.

**Part Five Righteousness as justice**

The biblical concept of righteousness also has a social justice and relational dimension. To desire righteousness is to desire that things be set right, that truth overcome falsehood, oppressors be restrained, vulnerable people be protected, broken relationships be reconciled, and communities reflect God's justice.

A person cannot seriously hunger for God's

righteousness while remaining indifferent to bigotry, oppression, exploitation, mistreatment of the vulnerable, dishonesty, abuse, racism, corruption, poverty, or cruelty. It is inconsistent to denounce public injustice while excusing cruelty, family violence, deceit, greed, or sexual immorality in private life. Biblical righteousness speaks to both the human soul and the human society.

## Part Six Righteousness Elsewhere in the Sermon on the Mount

Jesus says that his followers' righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 5:20. He then gives examples showing that righteousness is much deeper than outward conformity, for example the command against murder stoops down into anger and contempt, the command against adultery descends into lustful intention, truthfulness moves beyond theoretically correct vows to reliable speech, love reaches beyond friends and neighbours to include enemies, giving, prayer, and fasting must be directed toward God rather than public show, seeking God's kingdom and righteousness must take precedence over materialism.

Matthew 6:1 also warns against practicing righteousness "to be seen" by others, while Matthew 6:33 commands disciples to seek first God's kingdom and righteousness.

Righteousness in this context is thus both something believers practice and something we continually seek: intimate, neighbourly and universal righteousness

The scope of the verse may be summarized in these three dimensions: intimate righteousness: "Please Lord, make me holy"; neighbourly righteousness: "Please Lord, forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ", and universal righteousness: "Thy Kingdom come, on Earth as it is in Heaven

A mature reading holds these together. The disciple longs to be forgiven, transformed, and used as an agent of God's justice, while awaiting God's final renewal of creation.

Part Seven The Divine Promise That “They Shall Be Filled"

The verse begins with human hunger but ends fully satisfied. The hungry do not fill themselves as the form of the promise directs attention to God's action and He will replete them.

a) Grace precedes achievement

This promise guards against self-righteousness. Jesus does not say, "Blessed are those who successfully make themselves righteous." He blesses those who hunger and thirst and although their hunger is real, but their satiety is God's gift.

Christian obedience requires effort, but effort is not the same as earning salvation as this effort is a love-response for what God has already done in Jesus on the cross. Believers pray, resist temptation, seek justice, reconcile, study, worship, and serve. Yet none of these activities places God in their debt. Even the desire and strength to pursue righteousness are expressions of His grace.

b) Present fulfilment

There is a real fulfilment now. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:12). "Hath' is a form of the present tense (realis or indicative mood) of have (a fact.) We have eternal life now (See John 10:10). Through Christ, believers receive reconciliation with God now. Through the Holy Spirit, they begin to experience moral transformation. In Christian fellowship, worship, Scripture, prayer, and service, we receive a foretastes of the righteous life for which we yearn. If God filling us meant that we become perfect then the hunger would be futile. God meets us with mercy, forms new desires, produces new obedience, and gives real spiritual nourishment. This is a present fulfilment of Matthew 5:6.

c) Future fulfilment

The wording also points forward. The Beatitudes contain the hope of God's coming

kingdom: mourners will be comforted, the meek will inherit, and the hungry will be filled.

I remember Christchurch covered in snow this time last year. Although with the spring thaw the snow in the streets turned to unpleasant grey slush. However, when I walked up into the foothills, I saw the glorious sight of lovely rivulets and tiny waterfalls as the sun melted the sparkling white snow. I could honestly say the dominion of the winter was broken, but still little patches of snow remained. So it is in the Christian walk. The dominion of Satan's reign is broken, God is now rightfully King of the universe and yet "..The devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). This is why we still have an hungering and thirsting for righteousness.

The believer remains hungry because the world is not yet fully right and the believer is not yet fully holy. Christian experience therefore includes both satisfaction and continuing desire. God truly feeds his people now, and every present taste increases our longing for the completed kingdom.

This apparent paradox is important because we are satisfied in Christ, yet we desire to know him more, we have been declared righteous, yet we still pursue holy character, God's kingdom arrived in Jesus, Who said that it is within us (Luke 17:21), yet we pray for it to come

(Matthew 6:10 and Luke 11:2) and God has begun renewal, yet creation still groans for completion (Romans 8:22).

The final filling includes the removal of sin, the defeat of evil, the vindication of God's justice, and unbroken fellowship with God, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

**Part Eight What Matthew 5:6 Does Not Mean**

a) God does not bless self-righteousness (Matthew 6:2-4)

Self-righteousness is satisfaction with one's own moral record, often reinforced by comparison with people judged to be worse. Spiritual hunger is the opposite. The hungry know that they need only God can supply. The self-righteous person says, "I am better than they are." The spiritually hungry person says, "God, be merciful to me, transform me, and teach me to love."

"Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. 11) The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. 12) I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. 13) And

the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. 14) I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:10-14).

b) It does not bless vague spirituality

A person may desire peace, inspiration, or religious experience without wanting righteousness. They may desire association (with Christian ideals) but not transformation. Jesus identifies the object of the desire. The blessed hunger is not merely for spiritual fuzzy feelings but for life brought into alignment with God's will.

A longing for God that never affects honesty, money, sexuality, reconciliation, mercy, or justice should be examined carefully. This is hardly what it means to hunger and thirst after righteousness.

c) It does not promise every desire will be fulfilled

God's promise is aligned with His character and kingdom. He longs to fill us. The only problem that is too big for God is the one that we withhold from Him. But his giving is in accordance with His will, bearing in mind that

he only wants the very best for us (see Jeremiah 29:11).

This verse is not a general warranty that intense hunger or wanting makes any goal legitimate. The promise concerns hunger and thirst or righteousness, not wealth, influence, romance, health, comfort, or success.

The Virgin Mary said, "He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away" (Luke 1:53 - From *The Magnificat*).

d) It does not teach that we are saved based on our appetite for spiritual things

Even spiritual hunger is not a meritorious achievement by which people purchase salvation. Hunger is the expression of need, not an attainment of it. A rumbling tummy does not fill itself; it must be filled from without. The hungry person comes empty-handed (empty-tummied?) and leaves in satiation (until the hunger for the next spiritual meal. Saint Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:31, "...I die daily").

e) It does not allow for the provision of perfectionism

Perfectionism makes both salvation and our personal significance depend upon flawless performance by ourselves for ourselves. A gospel appetite rests in grace while pursuing growth. It produces repentance without despair

and produces effort without the deception of self-salvation.

## Part Nine Spiritual Appetite is a Diagnostic not a Prognostic

Physical appetite or the absence of it can indicate health, illness, habit, or deprivation. Spiritual appetite can reveal the condition of the heart. Just because you feel hungry, doesn't mean you will automatically be filled "... ye have not, because ye ask not" (James 4:2), "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: 8) For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matthew 7:7-8).

a) Signs of spiritual hunger

Hunger for righteousness may appear as a growing grief over sin without constant justifying or excuse-making, A desire to confess and repair wrongs rather than conceal them, an increasing interest in the Holy Bible as God's inspired word, a concern for integrity even when no one is watching, a willingness to forgive and seek reconciliation, compassion and a desire to advocate for people harmed by injustice, Dissatisfaction with performance-based or superficial religion, and the hope that God can still transform stubborn areas in your own life.

These signs may be imperfect and mixed with

conflicting desires and the point is not to achieve emotional intensity at every moment, every day, all the time. A genuine appetite can be weak, neglected, or temporarily dulled, yet still real.

b) Appetite can be spoiled

People often lose their physical appetite for nourishing food because they continually consume substitutes that fill without satisfying (my mother calls the like of this 'junk food'). Spiritual appetite can also be dulled by constant distractions, consumerism that teaches us to measure life by what we possess, cynicism that treats compromise as being mature and holiness as naïve, habitual indulgence in sin, religious activities that become a performance that substitutes social status for intimacy with God, repeatedly rehearsed resentment and even unwholesome entertainment (such as cinema, dance, drama, peep-shows or musicals) that train the imagination toward selfishness, cruelty, lust, vanity, or contempt,

The answer is not to become a troglodyte or withdrawal from every wholesome pleasure. Creation's gifts may be received gratefully. The issue is whether our moral appetites are ruled by spiritually nutrient-free substitutes.

## Part Ten Cultivating an Hunger for Righteousness

We cannot decree ourselves into authentic

desire by our own willpower, but we can bring our disordered appetites honestly before God and then practice 'healthy' habits to allow Him to reshapes them.

a) Pray for the desire for righteousness

When spiritual hunger is weak, begin with truthfulness:

Spiritual replenishment and transformation often begins when people stop performing and are openly and candidly honest with God.

b) Attend closely to Scripture

The Holy Bible was nit written simply to impart information but to initiate transformation. Holy Writ reveals God's character, diagnoses our false desires, announces God's grace, and gives to our holy longing universal words of expression.

Although not openly encouraged by my church, I personally love Bible study that challenges me to as questions such as, "What does this passage show me about God?" "What kind of person does it challenge me to become?" "What secret desire does it confront?" "What promise do I find that invites trust?" "What act of obedience should follow?"

c) Practice immediate repentance

Delayed obedience strengthens disordered desire.

(1 John 1:9) "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

When sin is recognized, confess it specifically and explicitly and where another person has been harmed, seek to make amends, restitution or reparations. Repentance is not only feeling sorrow for sin or its consequences; it is turning around toward what is right, just, proper, honest and pure.

d) Fast from competing appetites

Fasting can depict how strongly comfort governs us. Food fasting is one biblical form, when medically appropriate, but other temporary forms of abstinence may also uncover dependence on entertainment, sexuality, purchasing, praise, alcohol, or constant stimulation and arousal. We should aim to create an atmosphere where we would choose to seek God and re-focus our desires. Jesus said, "... seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness..." (Matthew 6:33).

e) Pursue tangible justice

A hunger for righteousness should be seen in our lives. Create a reputation for telling the truth when dishonesty would be profitable, defending or advocating for someone being mistreated, listen to those who are suffering or have suffered, refuse to take corrupt advantage

of any situation, give cheerfully and generously and reconcile differences wherever possible. Mere concern becomes tangible when demonstrated by faithful action.

f) Remain in Christian community

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25).

Appetites are communally contagious because faith communities teach their members what to admire and pursue, and so a healthy church environment should foster and nurture faith, love for Christ, truth, obedience, holiness, mercy, justice, repentance, and hope.

**Part Eleven Examples**

a) The hungry patient

Imagine a patient recovering from a serious illness. The return of appetite is encouraging because it indicates returning health, but appetite alone is not nourishment. The patient must receive food.

Likewise, spiritual hunger is encouraging, but it points beyond itself to God's provision because noticing, feeling or even boasting of our hunger neither satisfies nor saves us. Sheep come to the Shepherd to be fed, watered, nurtured, and brought home safely.

b) Salt water

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poen 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' has these words, "Day after day, day after day, / We stuck, nor breath nor motion; / As idle as a painted ship / Upon a painted ocean. / / Water, water, every where, / And all the boards did shrink; / Water, water, every where, / Nor any drop to drink. / / The very deep did rot: Oh Christ! / That ever this should be!"

A becalmed mariner or shipwrecked individual may be surrounded by water and yet die of thirst. Drinking seawater intensifies dehydration rather than providing rehydration.. Some of our unhealthy desires function in a similar manner because, like the saline, they promise satisfaction but deepen the desire for whatever it is that they claim to provide.

Approval, possessions, power, and pleasure can be good within proper limits. When treated as ultimate, however, they produce greater thirst. Jesus directs desire toward what God promises truly to satisfy. " Lord Acton (John Emerich Edward Dalberg-Acton) wrote that power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

c) A compass rather than a medallion

Hunger for righteousness is more like a compass than a medallion. A medallion says, "I

have attained the accomplishment, whereas a compass provides direction. Saint Paul, after perhaps ten years after his first visit to Philippi, wrote to the Philippians to say that still he hadn't achieved perfection. He said, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14)

**Thought Questions**

1. What appetite currently exerts the strongest influence over your decisions?

2. Where do you see the progression from spiritual poverty to hunger for righteousness in the Beatitudes?

3. How does biblical righteousness differ from social respectability?

4. Why must right standing with God and transformed character remain connected?

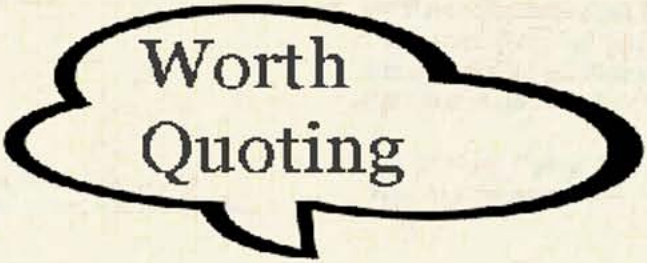
5. What happens when personal holiness is separated from social justice?

6. Which habit most strengthens your desire for righteousness?

7. Which habit most inhibits your desire for righteousness?

8. How can a believer be both satisfied in Christ and still spiritually hungry?

9. Is there a relationship, practice, or injustice in which your hungering for righteousness must




"A man is not blessed
because he is prosperous,
but because he is holy.
The Beatitudes are a chain of
pearls; they are not isolated
gems, but are connected
together by a thread of grace."

— Charles Spurgeon,
"The Beatitudes"

become actual obedience?

10. What would seeking God's kingdom and righteousness first look like in the coming week?

In conclusion, Matthew 5:6 gives us a picture of the Christian life cantered not on self-satisfaction but on holy desire. The blest person knows that something is missing and so he or she hungers for it. Because sin remains, injustice persists, and the world is not yet as God intends it to be. Nevertheless this dissatisfaction is coupled with confidence because Jesus promises that the hunger will not be in vain.

The verse calls us away from self-righteousness, superficial religion, and the pursuit of substitutes. It invites us to receive God's grace, pursue a transformed character, seek and advocate for justice for others, and causes us to hope for God's completed kingdom.

God supplies righteousness in Christ, cultivates righteousness through the Spirit, and will one day establish righteousness without opposition. The Christian life therefore begins, continues, and ends in dependent hope, hungry for God, nourished by grace, growing in holiness, working for justice, and oft praying, "Thy

kingdom come..." (Matthew 6:10).

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# Chapter 7 Blessed Are the Merciful

(Matthew 5:7) "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

William Shakespeare wrote,
"The quality of mercy is not strained;
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:
'T is mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown:
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this sceptred sway;
It is enthronèd in the hearts of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice."
(The Merchant of Venice Act IV, Scene 1)

Those who have received God's mercy become people who practice mercy, and their merciful lives confirm that they belong to the kingdom in which mercy triumphs over judgment.

Matthew 5:7 is simple enough for a child to memorize, but profound enough to mould an entire life "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

Matthew 5:7 contains a confusing blessing. Many cultures celebrate strength, achievement, independence, and victory. Mercy may be admired in theory, but it is often regarded as weakness in practice. Society says, "Do not let anyone take advantage of you" or "Give them what they deserve" or "Never forget what they did."

Jesus (as it seems is his convention) announces something radically different. He does not say, "Blessed are those who always win, succeed or come first." He says that the merciful are the ones who are blessed.

Mercy is not presented as an optional virtue for Christians but is one of the defining qualities of those who belong to God's kingdom. The Beatitudes describe the inner character that God's grace produces in followers of Jesus. Matthew 5:7 therefore concerns more than occasional acts of mercy or kindness. It describes a merciful way of life (See 1 Corinthians 13).

**Part One The setting**

Matthew 5-7 records the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus has announced that the kingdom of heaven is near, called disciples to follow him, and demonstrated the kingdom's power through healing. He then goes up a mountain, sits down in the customary posture of a teacher, and begins instructing his disciples.

The Beatitudes open that sermon. They are not a list of techniques for becoming successful. Nor are they ten independent requirements through which people earn salvation. They describe the surprising blessedness and transformed character of those who live under God's reign.

The first four Beatitudes emphasize a person's need before God: the poor in spirit recognize their spiritual poverty, those who mourn grieve over sin and brokenness, the meek surrender self-assertion and submit themselves to God, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness desire God's will more than self-satisfaction.

Matthew 5:7 then turns more explicitly toward our treatment of other people. Those who know that they are spiritually poor do not look proudly upon the poor. Those who mourn their own sin do not treat another sinner with cold superiority or indifference. Those who depend upon grace become inclined to extend grace to others. This sequence matters because in our selfishness, mercy toward others grows from the recognition that we ourselves needed and continue to need mercy.

**Part Two What Does "Blessed" Mean?**

The word translated "blessed" (or "blest) describes a person who enjoys God's favour and is in a truly good condition from God's perspective. Following sincere confession and repentance (turning to God and away from

sinful behaviours and thoughts) this person is justified in Gods sight just as if he or she had never sinned in the first place (this is mercy). It does not mean that merciful people will always feel cheerful or enjoy an easy life. Jesus said, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33)..

A merciful person may suffer precisely because of showing mercy. Forgiveness can be painful and compassion can be costly. Helping someone in distress may consume time, money, emotional strength or other resources. Defending the vulnerable may attract criticism. Nevertheless, Jesus calls the merciful blessed because God's verdict. It is never immediate comfort that determines a state of true blessedness.

The Beatitudes overturn ordinary assumptions: the world may call the aggressive person powerful; Jesus blesses the meek. The world may call the vengeful strong; yet Jesus blesses the merciful. The world may call the self-sufficient person secure; Jesus blesses the poor in spirit. Any self-made man has a fool for a maker.

Jesus is not merely giving ethical advice; he is announcing the values of God's kingdom.

As will be discussed in more detail in part six,

blessedness is also both present and future. The merciful already live under God's favour, but they also await the fullness of mercy when God's kingdom is revealed completely. This combination of present grace and future hope runs throughout the Beatitudes.

## Part Three What Is Mercy?

Mercy is compassion that enters another person's misery and acts for that person's good. It is related to pity, kindness, forgiveness, and generosity, but it is broader than any one of them. Mercy sees suffering, guilt, need, or helplessness and refuses to remain indifferent.

a) Mercy responds to suffering

When a person is hungry, lonely, sick, grieving, displaced, or oppressed, mercy does more than observe the condition. It moves toward that person.

Jesus illustrates this vividly in the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. The Samaritan sees a wounded man, is moved with compassion, treats his wounds, transports him to safety, and pays for his care. Mercy becomes a practical demonstration of hands-on Christianity..

This tells us that mercy is not merely an emotion. Compassion may be at beginning as a motivator, but merciful feeling becomes merciful action. For example before Jesus fed a

multitude, the Holy Bible says , "And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them..." (Matthew 14:14) and then He fed them.

D. L. Moody wrote, "The shepherd whose ninety and nine sheep were safe did not wait for the one astray to return; he went forth and sought and found it, and when he did find it he did not maul or kick or pound it; he took it to his bosom, and comforted and rescued and healed it."

b) Mercy responds to guilt

Mercy also concerns how we treat people who have wronged us. It does not pretend that wrongdoing is harmless. Rather, mercy refuses to make revenge, retribution vengeance, reprisal or punishment its ruling desire.

Forgiveness is therefore an important expression of mercy. In Matthew 18:21-35, Jesus tells of a servant who is forgiven an enormous debt but refuses to forgive a much smaller debt owed to him. The servant wants mercy for himself and strict judgment for someone else.

That contradiction is precisely what Matthew 5:7 confronts. Those who understand the magnitude of the mercy they have received cannot consistently remain merciless toward others.

c) Mercy identifies with another person

One of the most dangerous prayers we can pray is sometimes whispered from my lips with these words, "Lord, today let me see people through Your eyes." Try it and see what a difference it makes to the way we see other people, because a merciful person attempts to see another's condition from within. This does not require agreeing with everything the other person believes or does. It means recognizing the person's humanity, vulnerability, and need.

d) Mercy asks questions such as: "What suffering may this person be carrying?" or "What pressures or fears are affecting this situation?" or "How would I hope to be treated if I stood in this person's place?" or "What response would seek restoration rather than humiliation?" or maybe "how can I uphold truth without denying compassion?"

Mercy does not approach every situation as a prosecuting attorney nor constantly search for reasons for condemnation; "But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless" (Matthew 12:7).

It is willing to truth seriously while standing alongside people in their need.

e) Mercy reflects God's character

"Be ye therefore merciful, as your [Heavenly]

Father also is merciful" (Luke 6:36).

The (the Song of Mary) that we sing each week at Evensong (Vespers) on Sundays comes from the Holy Bible in Luke Chapter one, and the Virgin Mary said, "And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation" (Verse 50).

Throughout Scripture, mercy is first an attribute of God before it becomes a duty for human beings. God hears the cry of the oppressed, forgives repentant sinners, sustains the weak, and shows patience toward the undeserving.

Christians show mercy because God has dealt mercifully with them in Christ, not because human beings are naturally entitled to any form of leniency

The order is crucial: God shows mercy then people receive mercy through faith then God's mercy changes their hearts and then they begin to show mercy to others. Christian mercy is not an attempt to persuade a reluctant God to become merciful. It is a response to the God whose mercy has already moved toward sinners.

**Part Four Who Are "the Merciful"?**

Jesus does not say, "Blessed are those who occasionally perform a merciful act." He speaks of the merciful; that is people whose character

is increasingly marked by mercy, which does not imply perfection. A merciful Christian may sometimes be impatient, harsh, or reluctant to forgive. The question is not whether mercy is flawless, but whether it is becoming a recognizable direction of life.

a) They see the needs around them

Mercilessness often begins with inattention. We do not help because we do not truly see. We reduce people to inconveniences, failures, political categories, social classes or intolerant morally bigoted labelling. However, the merciful learn to notice the isolated person in a crowded room, the employee who is struggling silently the family burdened by illness or debt, the newcomer who does not understand the customs, mores or the culture, the offender who needs correction but also a path toward restoration; the neighbour whose behaviour may conceal deep distress, guilt or loneliness, or the grieving person we assume is just shy..

Seeing does not solve everything, but mercy rarely commences to show itself until indifference is overcome or interrupted.

b) They are moved

The path to becoming a nothing in life is to do nothing. It is possible to see suffering and remain emotionally detached. Biblical mercy includes compassion, a genuine concern that

another person's misery should be relieved.

Emotional concern alone is important, but not enough. A hard heart can perform outwardly correct behaviours while remaining untouched by another's need. Jesus calls his followers toward an inward disposition from which compassionate action flows.

c) They act

Mercy may take the form of feeding someone who is hungry; listening patiently to someone who is grieving, giving money responsibly, visiting or writing to someone who is sick or imprisoned, defending a person treated unfairly, forgiving an offence, correcting someone with a soft answer (Proverbs 15:1), gentleness, declining to gossip about another person's failure and creating a realistic opportunity for restitution and restoration.

Mercy is not and unlimited personal resource because not every person can meet every other person's needs. It is, however, a willingness to do the good that wisdom, opportunity, and responsibility place in our path.

d) They remember their own need

A merciful person remembers that they too are dependent upon grace.

This memory does not erase moral distinctions or imply that all actions are equally harmful

but does undermine superiority and pride.

A person or even a church that forgets its need for mercy becomes harsh. A person or church that remembers God's grace to them can speak truth without secretly revelling in condemnation.

**Part Five "... For They Shall Obtain Mercy."**

The second half of the Beatitude creates an interpretive question. Is Jesus saying that people earn God's mercy by being merciful? The answer is no. Mercy, by definition, cannot be earned. If it were payment for moral performance, it would be a wage rather than mercy, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

Jesus is not presenting a commercial transaction suggesting that is we perform enough merciful actions the God will owe you mercy, merciful performance is evidence that God's mercy has affected a person's life.

Mercy does not buy salvation, it just reveals a heart being transformed by God's grace.

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches his disciples to pray, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12). I have found that every part of the Lord's prayer is found in earlier (for example Rabinical) literature except the phrase, "as we forgive our debtors",

which is why Jesus, immediately after the prayer explains, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: 15) But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14-15).

The parable of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:21-35) makes the same point. A man who has supposedly received colossal forgiveness but refuses to extend even modest forgiveness shows that he has not truly understood the implications of his master's mercy.

The forgiven become forgiving. The loved become loving. Those who live because of mercy become merciful.

**Part Six Present and Future Mercy**

The promise includes God's present care, but it also points toward final judgment. Every person will ultimately stand before God in need of mercy. Jesus assures merciful people that they will find the mercy upon which their entire hope depends. The final judgment is more about how we have judged God (by responding to His mercy) than it is about judging us.

This is not because our record is faultless, but because merciful lives bear witness that te merciful belong to a merciful King Jesus.

A severe warning is pronounced against the

unmerciful in James 2:13, "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment."

**Part Seven Mercy Vs Justice**

One of the most common misunderstandings is that mercy means condoning, ignoring or justifying wrongdoing. It does not. Mercy is not the opposite of justice, because justice asks what is right, whereas mercy asks how what is right can be acted upon with compassion, love, restraint, and a desire for restoration, without denying the truth.

If someone has caused harm, mercy does not require us to say that nothing happened. Calling evil good is neither loving nor merciful. Genuine mercy takes suffering seriously, including the suffering of victims. Mercy does not automatically involve trust. Forgiveness (which is given freely) means relinquishing personal vengeance and placing judgment in God's hands. Trust (which must be earned) concerns whether a person has demonstrated reliability, dependability, trustworthiness, honesty, fidelity, etc..

A person may forgive while recognizing that trust must be rebuilt gradually. Mercy will leave open the possibility of restoration without pretending that restoration has already occurred.

Forgiveness can be offered by one individual,

however reconciliation ordinarily requires truth, repentance, safety, and participation from both sides. Having said that, we ought to forgive whether or not the other party accepts that forgiveness or not.

Mercy may include consequences as demonstrated by King David who repented (Psalm 51) but still had to suffer the consequences of his sins with Bathsheba and Uriah the Hittite.

A church may exercise discipline mercifully. A parent may impose consequences mercifully. A court may administer justice while considering circumstances and rehabilitation.

Mercy does not always remove consequences but does refuse cruelty, humiliation, vindictiveness, and the pleasure of another person's destruction.

God perfectly combines justice and mercy, "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face"(Psalm 89:14).

Although never trivializing sin, Jesus welcomed sinners, touched the untouchable, restored the broken, and gave freely of himself for guilty you and me. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psalm 85:10)

**Part Eight Forms of Mercy**

a) Compassionate mercy is mercy toward those who suffer. It includes food, shelter, companionship, medical care, generosity, advocacy, and practical service.

b) Forgiving mercy is mercy toward those who have sinned against us. It gives up revenge and seeks to overcome evil with good. It also includes forgiving ourselves.

c) Patient mercy makes room for growth. Some people do not need immediate material assistance as much as they need patience. "The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all" (Matthew 18:26 - see also Vs 29). "But thou, O man of God, ... follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness" (1 Timothy 6:11).

d) Corrective mercy speaks honestly, but aims at repentance and restoration rather than humiliation. Sometimes the merciful action is to tell someone the truth. Silence may allow destructive behaviour to continue.

e) Corporate mercy may include fair appeal processes, care for the vulnerable, proportionate discipline, reasonable accommodations, opportunities for rehabilitation, and policies that do not reduce people to their worst moment, because mercy is not limited to private relationships. Prisons, workplaces, churches, hospitals, law courts,

governments and educational institutions can create practices that treat people with dignity.

## Part Nine Practicing Mercy

a) Begin by receiving mercy

A person cannot sustainably give what they refuse to receive. We cannot give what we do not have. Christian mercy begins with confession rather than self-justification or pretence. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Mercy toward others is nourished by repeatedly and daily returning to receive mercy.

b) Replace condemnation with enquiry

When another person misbehaves, our first reaction is often the least charitable one but Mercy pauses before 'jumping the gun' (to borrow a phrase from foot-racing).

Instead of immediately assuming the person to be selfish," we may pause to reflect on the fact that we may not understand the full picture. That pause does not excuse or justify wrongdoing but it does protect us from the pride of believing that we see everything clearly and 'know it all'.

c) Practice costly compassion

There is a parable about a pig and a chicken that were discussing the needs of homeless

people, and the chicken, worried that she might be asked to contribute to chicken soup, suggested giving the homeless people bacon and eggs for breakfast. The pig replied that for the chicken it would be just an interested contribution but for the pig it would be total sacrifice.

"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8) Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Philippians 3:7-8).

Mercy becomes tangible when it costs something in the way of time, convenience, money, status, emotional energy, or the surrender of settling of scores.

Every day presents ordinary opportunities to slowly listen without judging, give without seeking recognition, or vying for kudos, or looking for praise or expecting reward, choosing not pass on gossip (especially if it may be damaging), help someone who cannot repay you, advocate or speak up for someone who lacks influence, make room for repentance and to pray for someone who has offended you.

d) Speak mercifully

I first read the formula, 'Is it kind? Is it true? Is

it necessary?' in a poem called 'Three Gates' by Beth Day, "If you are tempted to reveal a tale to you someone has told about another, make it pass, before you speak, three gates of gold. These narrow gates: First, 'is it true?' Then, 'is it needful?' In your mind give truthful answer. And the next is last and narrowest, 'Is it kind?' And if to reach your lips at last it passes through these gateways three, then you may tell the tale, nor fear, what result of speech may be".

Speech is one of the most exculpated tests of mercy. Ask, Is it kind? Is it true? Is it necessary? Am I trying to restore or merely to wound? Would I say it if the person were present? Am I defining someone by one (or their worst) act?

Without avoid difficult truths, merciful speech is gently spoken without censure, disrespect, condemnation, contempt or condescension. .

e) Establish sensible boundaries

Mercy without wisdom can become crippling, so before helping, consider what form of assistance genuinely promotes good, restoration and long-term blessing..

Giving money is not always the most expedient response to immediate needs. Immediate reconciliation is not always safe. Removing every consequence of a behaviour may prevent growth and maturity. Mercy seeks the other person's long-term good, not simply immediate

relief from discomfort.

f) Pray for a merciful thought-life

Many failures of mercy begin in our thought because we cannot picture ourselves in another person's position, or we cannot imagine them changing, or we cannot imagine them responding without revenge. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5).

**Thought Questions**

1. Where/when do I most naturally show mercy?

2. Toward whom do I find mercy most difficult?

3. Do I confuse mercy with weakness or permissiveness?

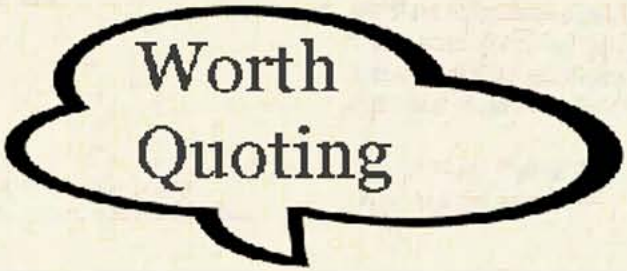
4. Am I withholding forgiveness because I think it requires immediate trust?

5. Have I received God's mercy personally, or do I mainly think of myself as morally self-sufficient?

6. Does my speech restore people or return them to their failures?

7. What practical act of mercy is presently within my area of responsibility?

8. Where might a boundary or consequence actually be the more merciful response?




"Blessed are the happiness-makers! Blessed are they that take away attritions, that remove friction, that make the courses of life smooth, and the intercourse of men gentle!"

— Henry Ward Beecher,
Royal Truths, 1866

9. Does my church or community make restoration realistically possible?

10. What would change this week if Matthew 5:7 shaped my decisions?

In conclusion, Matthew 5:7 gives us a searching description of life in God's kingdom. Mercy is not sentimental weakness. It is compassion strong enough to enter suffering, forgiveness strong enough to surrender revenge, and truthfulness strong enough to seek restoration rather than humiliation.

The verse does not teach that we purchase God's favour by being kind, rather it teaches that those who truly receive mercy and acknowledge it in gratitude are transformed by it. God's mercy enters their lives and begins to flow through them toward others.

The real question is therefore not merely, "Have I performed enough merciful acts?", It is, "Has God's mercy so captured my heart that mercy is becoming my way of life?"

The poor in spirit know they need mercy. Those who mourn grieve their lack of it. The meek do not demand retribution; those who hunger for righteousness desire mercy joined with truth, and the merciful discover, now and ultimately, that it is a King who is rich in mercy who

governs the kingdom of God. God said, "{I show] mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments" (Exodus 20:6). "Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin..." (Exodus 34:7). "Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations" (Deuteronomy 7:9). "O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever" (1 Chronicles 16:34).

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# Chapter 8 Blessed are the Pure in Heart

(Matthew 5:8) "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

## Part One The Meaning of Biblical Blessedness

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." is one of the shortest and yet most profound statements Jesus made in the Sermon on the Mount:

At first glance, this Beatitude appears simple. Jesus speaks about purity of heart and seeing God. But when we begin to examine it carefully, we discover that it raises some of the deepest questions of Christian living.

What does it mean to be pure in heart? Is Jesus talking about being morally perfect or maybe having pure thoughts? Does pure on heart mean avoiding certain sins, or does Jesus mean something more profound: a heart that has been transformed, cleansed, and completely devoted to God?

The most remarkable part of the verse is the promise that they shall see God, considering verses such as John 1:18 and 1 John 4:12 which both say, "No man hath seen God at any time".

The Holy Bible tells us that God is holy, invisible, and beyond human comprehension.

Yet Jesus says that the pure in heart will see Him.

So Matthew 5:8 is not simply a teaching about morality but our relationship with God.

This Beatitude tells us both what God desires in us, and what He promises to those who belong to Him.

## Part Two The Context of the Text

As part of a larger message (The Sermon on the Mount), Matthew 5:3-12 describes people whom God calls blessed.

Jesus does not begin His teaching by saying, "Here is a list of ten things you must accomplish in order to become acceptable to God", instead, He describes the ten characteristics of people who belong to God's kingdom.

There is a progression in the statements the He makes: the poor in spirit recognize their spiritual poverty, those who mourn recognize the seriousness of sin and the brokenness of the world, the meek surrender their lives to God rather than insisting on their own way, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness desire God's will, the merciful extend to others the mercy they themselves have received and then Jesus says, Blessed are the pure in heart".

The direction is progressively inward, beneath external behaviour and into the heart of human existence.

The religious culture of Jesus' day often emphasized outward observance. It was in acknowledgement of this that Jesus said, "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. 2) Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 3) But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: 4) That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly. 5) And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 6) But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (Matthew 6:1-6).

People could look pious on the outside while remaining spiritually perverted within. Jesus repeatedly challenged that kind of religion: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's

bones, and of all uncleanness. 28) Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (Matthew 23:27-28).

Jesus is teaching that God is not interested in our external appearance, "... the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

**Part Three What Does Jesus Mean by Blessed?**

Jesus is not simply saying, "Happy are people who have pure hearts" nor "Happy people have pure hearts" as that would be too shallow. Happiness is dependent upon what happens, however biblical blessedness is not dependent upon circumstances. For example, a person can experience suffering and still be blessed. A person can be poor and still be blessed. A person can mourn and still be blessed. A person can even experience persecution and still be blessed, because biblical blessedness is fundamentally about being in a right relationship with and rightly related to God.

Society says, "Blessed are the wealthy, the successful, the powerful, or even those who imagine that they have everything under control, whereas Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart."

In other words, thriving spiritually is not determined by what we possess or display

externally, but begins with how God sees us internally.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, "Jesus differs from all other teachers; they reach the ear, but he instructs the heart; they deal with the outward letter, but he imparts an inward taste for the truth".

**Part Four What is the Heart?**

What does Jesus mean by heart?

When we hear the word 'heart', we often think either of a physical organ in the body or maybe we think about the seat of our emotions. "Mum has a kind heart" or "Dad follows his heart." But in biblical thought, the concept of the heart means much more than emotions because it includes the inner person: our thoughts, desires, motives, will, attitudes, affections, and our moral character.

The heart is the centre of who we are, as Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

Jesus makes a similar point in Matthew 15:18-19, "... those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. 19) For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:"

He teaches that evil actions ultimately come from within the human heart.

So when Jesus says, "Blessed are the pure in heart," He is not merely saying: "Blessed are those who have pure behaviour." What He is telling us is, "Blessed are those whose inner lives are being brought into alignment with God."

This is so much deeper, because a person can perform a good action for a bad reason, or give money or gifts because they want recognition (see Matthew 6:1-2), or pray in public because they want to impress others (see Matthew 6:5).

A person can fast solely to be seen as religious (see Matthew 6:16), or can serve in church because they want status (See 1 Timothy 5-7), or a person can speak religious talk while secretly harbouring bitterness, pride, jealousy, or hatred, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Timothy 3:5).

Outwardly, everything may look good, but God sees the heart (see 1 Samuel 16:7).

This is why the message of Jesus goes so deep; Christianity is not merely about changing our behaviour, it is about allowing God to transform the person "from the inside out".

**Part FiveWhat Does "Pure" Mean?**

Now we come to the word "pure." The Greek word is 'katharos', that can carry the idea of something that is clean, unmixed, undefiled, or free from contamination.

Think about pure water; if we say that water is pure, we mean that it is not contaminated by harmful substances, or think about pure gold; pure gold has been refined so that impurities have been removed. Jesus applies this concept to the human heart.

Purity does not mean sinless perfection because if Jesus meant that only people who had never sinned or who no linger sin could see God, then no human being could meet the requirement. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"(Romans 3:23). "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth" (1 John 1:6), "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1 John 1:10).

The Holy Bible consistently teaches that all human beings are sinners and that we need God's grace.

Therefore, purity of heart cannot mean that I have never sinned; rather, it means that the heart has been cleansed and oriented toward God. A pure heart is not a heart that has never

been dirty. It is a heart that has been "washed by God's grace and continually surrendered to Him"

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Psalm 51 provides a beautiful example. After David's sin, he cries out to God, "Create in me a pure heart, O God." He doesn't say, "I will make myself pure", he asks God to create in him a pure heart, because purity of heart is ultimately God's work in us. We cooperate with God's saving and transmuting grace, but we do not/ cannot save or transform ourselves by our own strength.

**Part Six Purity is About Undivided Devotion**

"And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart" (Jeremiah 24:7).

There is another important aspect of purity and that is that a pure heart is a whole heart, "Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart" (Psalm 119:2).

It is not divided between God and competing masters, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other;

or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other... " (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13)

Imagine a glass of clean water that we could say is pure, but if we pour salt into it, the contents become mixed as the salt is dissolved, creating impure water. Jesus is calling us to an undivided relationship with God not one that says that God is just of many important things in my life, but God is front, back and centre.

This does not mean that Christians cannot love their families, enjoy their work, have hobbies, pursue education, or appreciate the good things of creation. It does mean, however, that none of those things can occupy the place that belongs to God. This then is idolatry, for I believe that an idol is anything we put before or consider more important than God.

For every desire, my heart needs to as if it will take God's place, will it bring me closer to God, or will it become a substitute for God.

Anything could become a substitute for God in our lives: money, success, prestige, sex and relationships, popularity, recognition, and even religion can become a substitute for God when a person becomes so concerned about appearing religious that they lose their love for God..

Purity of heart means that above and beyond everything else there is a fundamental desire for God.

"Happy is that people ... yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD" (Psalm 144:15).

## Part Seven Purity and Our Motives

Purity also concerns our motives. Two people can do exactly the same thing for completely different reasons.

Consider two people who give generously to the poor.

One gives because he genuinely loves the person and wants to help; the other gives because he wants people to praise him. The outward action is identical, but the heart is different.

Jesus addresses this very issue in Matthew 6 when He teaches about giving, praying, and fasting as mentioned earlier. He repeatedly warns His followers against practicing righteousness simply to be seen by others. This is a powerful challenge.

We need to ask the big 'why' questions: Why am I doing what I am doing?, Why am I offended when nobody notices what I have done?, Why do I attend church?, Why do I give?, Why do I help others?, Why do I pray?, Why do I preach?, Why do I serve?, , Why do I want recognition?, Why do I want success?

Purity of heart means allowing God to examine not only "what we do", but "why we do it".

A prayer of someone who genuinely desires purity is "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: 24) And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23-24).

**Part Eight "For They Shall See God"**

Now we arrive at the extraordinary promise: "For they shall see God."

There are several dimensions to this promise.

1) We see God through spiritual relationship.

Those who have been reconciled to God begin to daily recognize His presence and work, they begin to see God's character in Scripture, they recognize His grace. They become more sensitive to His guidance, they see His work in their lives and in the lives of others.

This is not physical sight but spiritual perception. Saint Peter describes unbelieving humanity as having a kind of spiritual blindness, while the gospel brings light. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

The heart purified by God increasingly notices the things that others overlook.

2) We see God the Father through Jesus Christ

the Son.

In response to Philip asking Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father..", "Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?" (John 14:8-9).

Saint Mark calls Jesus the Son of God (Mark 1:1). My father's name (Hartley) and many of his physical characteristics are also the same in me because I am his son and I am also a 'Hartley'. Jesus, as God's Son is also God, as Saint Paul says, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9).

When we look at Jesus, we see God's compassion, holiness, mercy, justice, love, willingness to forgive, and God's opposition to evil. Purity of heart therefore draws us toward Christ. The more clearly we see Christ, the more clearly we understand who God is.

3) There is a future fulfilment of this promise which points beyond this present life.

Scripture looks forward to a day when God's people will experience His presence in a fuller and more immediate, direct and personal way.

Saint John has said, "And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads" (Revelation 22:4),

The ultimate goal of salvation is not merely that I get to go to heaven, but that get to be with God.

The pure in heart will see God, which means that the promise is therefore not merely about receiving something from God, it is about receiving God Himself.

**Part Nine How Do We Become Pure in Heart?**

We cannot manufacture spiritual purity by wishing for it, by willpower or by good deeds. We need God's grace to cleanse us.

The gospel tells us that forgiveness and reconciliation with God are found through Jesus Christ, but God's work does not end with forgiveness.

Saint John reminds us that God also begins the process of sanctification, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Again "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." (John 17:19).

And Saint Paul reminds us that it is God who finishes it transforming us into the likeness of Christ, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

So how do we participate in this

transformation?

1. Come honestly before God, do not hide your sin; confess it and bring your failures into God's light.

2. Let Scripture examine you.

God's word as alive and well, living and active, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12)

Mark Twain says that he read the Bible looking for loopholes. While troubled by what he read, he said, "It ain't those parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand."

3. Guard what enters your heart.

"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." (Proverbs 4:23)

What we repeatedly watch, read, listen to, and think about shapes us. Hannah More in 'Florio and His Friend' wrote, "Small habits well pursued, betimes / May reach the dignity of crimes."

Proverbs 4:25 says, "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee". This suggest that we should therefore ask

if these things are really forming me into the type of person that Jesus Christ wants me to become. Job says that he had made a covenant with his eyes (Job 31:1).

A motto that I have taken personally onboard is, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes." (Psalm 101:3).

"He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; 16) He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure" (Isaiah 33:15-16).

4. Practice repentance.

Repentance is not just feeling guilty, it means turning away from sin and turning toward God; surrendering rather that justifying or rationalising sin.

5. Pray for a clean heart.

Asaph in Psalm 73:1 said, " Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart."

David's prayer in Psalm 51 (that I mentioned earlier) remains relevant, "Create in me a pure heart, O God." because purity begins with dependence upon God.

6. Keep your eyes on Christ.

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2)

By beholding we become changed, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Christian transformation happens as we continually turn our attention toward Jesus.

We don't become like Christ by trying harder but as we remain connected to Christ, we are transformed as God's Spirit, the Holy Ghost, works in us as.

**Part Ten A Clean Window**

Imagine standing inside a house looking through a window.

The sun is shining outside, but the window is covered with dirt. The sunlight has not disappeared; the problem is the window. The dirt prevents us from seeing clearly.

We cannot produce purity on our own. If our room is dark, it could be for one of three possible reasons. Either we have deliberately shut out the light, or the sun isn't shining or

(shame) the window is dirty. You can wash the windows, you can open the drapes, but you can't make the sun shine.

In a similar way, God's presence and glory are not dependent upon our ability to perceive Him, but sin, pride, selfishness, resentment, and divided loyalties can distort our spiritual vision or b your deliberate choices and wilful disobedience obscure our view of Him.

Purity of heart is like having the window cleaned or the curtains removed and so we begin to see God more clearly His goodness, His holiness, His mercy, His activity in our lives, the needs of other people, our own sin, our lack of honesty and eventually, we see Christ more clearly.

Purity of heart, like an eye salve (Revelation 3:18), gives us clear uninterrupted spiritual vision.

**Part Eleven The Challenge of Matthew 5:8**

Matthew 5:8 confronts two common misunderstandings.

The first misunderstanding is legalism which says, "If I behave perfectly, God will accept me."

But the gospel says, "God's grace comes first, to cleanses us, forgive us, and transform us.

The second misunderstanding is gaudy grace.

Gaudy grace says, "Since God forgives me,

purity doesn't really matter; I can do as I please because God will forgive me anyway."

Saint Paul wrote, "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. 15) What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid" (Romans 6:14-15).

Jesus rejects that idea too. The person who receives God's grace is called into a transformed life.

Grace does not make holiness unnecessary, it makes it possible."

The pure heart is therefore neither self-righteous nor careless but humble enough to admit the need for God's grace, and having received grace the pure heart chooses to live for God, shows gratitude and shares the good news with others.

**Thought Questions**

1. "What does Jesus mean by "blessed"?"

2. "What does He mean by "pure in heart"?"

3. "What does it mean to "see God"?"

4. "How can we pursue purity of heart in our daily lives?"

5. "What do I desire most?"

6. "What controls my emotions (anger, jealousy, fear, self-worth?"

7. "Whose approval do I want most?"

8. "Is there anything I am unwilling to surrender to God?"

9. "Do I want God Himself or merely God's blessings?"

10. "Do I want God's protection without wanting God's presence?

In conclusion, here are some key scriptures to read Alongside Matthew 5:8...

(Psalm 24:3-4) "Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? 4) He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully."

(Psalm 51:10) "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

(Proverbs 4:23) "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

(Matthew 6:1-18) "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. 2) Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 3) But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: 4) That

thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly. 5) And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 6) But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. 7) But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. 8) Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. 9) After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. 10) Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. 11) Give us this day our daily bread. 12) And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. 13) And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. 14) For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: 15) But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. 16) Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may

appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 17) But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; 18) That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

(Matthew 15:18-20) "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. 19) For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: 20) These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man."

(John 14: 8-11) Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. 9) Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? 10) Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. 11) Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake."

(Hebrews 4:12-13) "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. 13) Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

(Revelation 22:3-4) "And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: 4) And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads."

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# Chapter 9 Blessed are the Peacemakers

(Matthew 5:9) "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."

## Part One. What Is a Peacemaker?

Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God", but what exactly is a peacemaker?

A peacemaker is not simply someone who dislikes arguments, avoids difficult conversations or who says, "Let's just forget about it," when a conflict exists. Nor is a peacemaker is not necessarily someone who keeps everyone happy. Biblical peacemaking is much more profound.

A peacemaker vigorously works to restore broken relationships and to guide people into reconciliation, completeness and the acknowledgement of truth.

Peace in the Bible is more than the absence of fighting so Jesus is not saying, "Blessed are those who avoid conflict."

He is saying, "Blessed are those with grace gently lead people to enjoying God's type of peace."

## Part Two The Context Within the Beatitudes

Jesus begins, "Blessed are the poor in spirit...", then "Blessed are they that mourn...", followed by "Blessed are the meek...", moving on to "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness...", then "Blessed are the merciful...", followed by "Blessed are the pure in heart...", and now, "Blessed are the peacemakers".

Notice the progression: the person who recognizes spiritual poverty becomes dependent upon God, that person mourns over sin and brokenness, then that person becomes meek rather than proud, then that person hungers for righteousness and becomes merciful, he or she then seeks purity of heart and only the can that person becomes a peacemaker in the biblical sense.

Biblical peacemaking begins within the heart. We cannot bring peace to others while being filled with bitterness, pride, anger, bigotry, hatred, revenge, jealousy or with an air of superiority. Before We must allow God to do a work of reconciliation within us before He can use us to reconcile differences between other people.

(Matthew 5:23-26) "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; 24) Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then

come and offer thy gift. 25) Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. 26) Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing."

## Part Three Peace in the Bible is More Than the Absence of Conflict

The biblical concept of peace is much more profound than simply refraining from fighting or conflict. The Old Testament frequently uses the Hebrew word 'shalom', an expression that can be used for all parts of speech; as a noun, adjective, verb, adverb, and interjection.

In this context it is a concept that can communicate ideas of happiness, wholeness, completeness, unity, well-being, welfare, and harmony.

To comprehend the biblical idea of peace, imagine the restoration of a broken relationship or a family that has been divided becoming reconciled, or enemies laying down their hostility and weaponry or injustice being confronted and relationships being restored.

Suppose two people are in conflict because one person has hurt, misunderstood or offended the other and when one asks for peace, both stop talking. That's not peace, that's silence.

Peacemaking aims for reconciliation not silence.

**Part Four Peacemaking Is Not Peacekeeping**

There is an important difference between peacemaking and peacekeeping.

A peacekeeper may try to stop conflict' "Stop the arguing.", whereas a peacemaker seeks to address the reasons behind the conflict.

A peacekeeper wants the arguing to cease and quietness to be restored, but a peacemaker wants the estrangement to cease and the relationship to be restored.

A peacekeeper may avoid uncomfortable or difficult conversations, whereas a peacemaker is willing to have those challenging conversations when necessary.

Peacemaking requires courage, especially when the easiest thing is to remain silent, take sides or to simply walk away. Peacemaking takes the time and energy to move the conflict toward understanding truth, settling justice, extending and receiving forgiveness and ultimately reconciliation.

**Part Five Jesus, the Ultimate Peacemaker**

The greatest example of peacemaking is Jesus Christ.

The Good News component of the Gospel is reconciliation.

Saint Paul continues, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 18) And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; 19) To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. 20) Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:17-20).

Humanity is separated from God by sin, but God steps into history to restore the relationship between Himself and fallen humanity.

When Saint Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5 that God was reconciling the world to Himself through Christ, we learn that Jesus therefore does not merely teach peace, he creates peace.

Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

Colossians 1:18-22 speaks of Christ making peace through the blood of His cross. Saint Paul, speaking of Jesus, wrote, "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the

beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. 19) For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; 20) And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. 21) And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled 22) In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight:"

The cross is therefore front and centre of any biblical understanding of peace because the cross deals with the core problem of human conflict, and that is that sin is separation from God.

Jesus does not simply ask us to try harder at reconciliation, He deals with the fundamental spiritual problem of separation and therefore He reconciles sinners to God. And those who have been reconciled are expected to become agents of reconciliation in the world, *id est* peacemakers.

**Part Six The Cost of Peacemaking**

Peacemaking can be costly and Jesus Himself paid the ultimate price for reconciliation: sacrifice. As a candle, for example, lights other candles it eventually consumes itself.

A peacemaker may have to be the first to apologise, forgive someone, confess and admit wrongdoing, put pride aside, listen with patience, undergo misunderstanding, refuse to seek for revenge and/or sacrifice personal convenience, time or money.

Sometimes peacemaking means surrendering the desire to win without surrendering truth, or it may involve surrendering our pride when humility will bring healing. We are not called to win every argument or fight alone every battle or conflict, but to humbly reflect Christ, asking for His wisdom James the Just (The brother of the Jesus) wrote, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. 6) But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. 7) For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. 8) A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (James 1:5-8).

**Part Seven Peacemaking and Truth**

We must tread carefully because Biblical peace is never peace at any price. Jesus never teaches us to call evil good or justify misconduct, simply to avoid conflict.

The prophets confronted injustice, Jesus confronted hypocrisy and the apostles challenged serious wrongdoing, therefore,

peacemaking does not mean failing to speak truth.

Saint Paul in Ephesians 4:14-15 wrote, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; 15) But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:"

Truth without love is both dishonest and cruelty and love without truth can become wishy-washy sentimentality.

Christian peacemaking holds both together.

A peacemaker can establish boundaries without vengeance and pursue justice without becoming bitter.

**Part Eight Peacemaking in the Family**

The family is one of the most important places to practice Matthew 5:9 because families also experience conflict when members vie for supremacy, husbands and wives disagree, parents and children misunderstand one another, siblings carry old hurts, words spoken years ago can continue to cause anguish.

Peacemaking begins with respect and humility. Try these phrases, "I was wrong. Please forgive me, or "What you are feeling at this moment, please help me understand," or I not out to win

an argument, I just want us to be reconciled."

Biblical peacemaking causes a radical transformation in the way families handle conflict and disagreements. Ask yourself, "Which is more important, being in the right or being reconciled".

**Part Nine Peacemaking in the Church**

Ideally the church should be a model of God's perfect peace, but churches are made up of imperfect human beings.

Therefore, churches can and do experience competition, disagreements, division. hurt feelings, leadership disputes, misunderstandings and personality conflicts. This beatitude in Matthew 5:9 challenges church-goers not to become persons who create division.

Church-goers can ask: "Am I contributing to peace?", "Am I encouraging reconciliation?", "Am I really listening to both sides?", "Am I praying for the people with whom I disagree?", "Am I gossiping or spreading information that will create suspicion or cause division?"

Every church should both preach reconciliation and practice it.

Isaiah 26:3 gives us direction, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."

## Part Ten Peacemaking in Our Neighbourhood

Biblical peacemaking means caring about peace in the society in which we live.

Peacemaking does not mean ignoring injustice because injustice often causes or escalates conflict, instead peacemaking includes responding appropriately to bigotry, discrimination, exploitation, hatred, hostility between communities, injustice, social divisions and street or family violence.

Biblical peacemaking may require courageously challenging the environment that creates hostility, asking God to show you how you can become an instrument of God's peace in the setting where God has placed you.

It may involve anything from reconciling two people, advocating for or defending someone who is being mistreated, listening to someone with whom we disagree, bringing divided people into conversation or refusing to participate in hate-speech or inappropriate behaviour.

## Part Eleven The Greatest Enemy of Peace

Pride is what destroys peace most easily.

Pride says that I must be right, must win, will not apologize or forgive and my desires must be pre-eminent.

Where pride builds walls, humility builds bridges; where pride builds barricades, humility builds gateways; where pride closes doors, humility opens windows; and where pride sets up blockades, humility lays out a welcome mat.

The Beatitudes prepare us for peacemaking because the poor in spirit recognize their dependence and reliance upon God, the meek surrender their need for domination or supremacy, the merciful learn to receive and extend grace, the pure in heart seek God's will and the peacemaker becomes an instrument of grace and reconciliation when he or she stops trying to be the focus of every conflict.

**Part Twelve "They Shall Be Called the Children of God"**

Now we come to the second portion of Jesus' statement, "...for they shall be called the children of God."

Perhaps Jesus connect peacemaking with being called God's children, because children often resemble their parents and God's children should reflect the character of their heavenly Father.

If God reconciles, forgives, restores and reaches out toward humanity, then when His children become peacemakers, they are called to demonstrate something of God's character.

A Christian is not defined as a person who

adheres to certain doctrines; a Christian is defined, in part, as someone who reflects the character of God in his or her life an conduct.

## Part Thirteen Practical Ways to Become a Peacemaker

Songwriters Sy Miller and Jill Jackson wrote, "Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me, / Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be. / With God as our Father, brothers all are we, / Let me walk with my brother, in perfect harmony. / / Let peace begin with me, let this be the moment now, / With every step I take, let this be my solemn vow, / To take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally. / Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me!"

How can we practice Matthew 5:9?
1. Listen before speaking. Many conflicts continue remain unresolved because people are preparing what they will say next rather than listening. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 11:15)

2. Refuse gossip. My mother told me that loose lips sink ships. Trust in a relationship takes time to develop, but gossip can destroy it in a moment. Mother also said in partial jest, that people who gossip should be hung by the tongue and people who listen to gossip should be hung by the ears.

"For in many things we offend all. If any man

offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. 3) Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. 4) Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. 5) Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! 6) And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. 7) For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: 8) But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. 9) Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. 10) Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. 11) Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? 12) Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh" (James 3:2-12).

3. Speak directly.

"But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay,

nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matthew 5:37)

If there is a problem speak to the person concerned before talking to anyone else.

Jesus said, "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother" (Matthew 18:15).

4. Apologize quickly.

Do not allow a prideful attitude to unnecessary delay resolving conflict. "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: 27) Neither give place to the devil" (Ephesians 4:26-27).

5. Forgive.

Forgiveness is not excusing a behaviour, condoning sin, justifying actions nor pretending that a misdemeanour never happen, but it does mean choosing not to let revenge control your heart.

Saint Paul wrote, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6) To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. 7) In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins,

according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1:5-7).

6. Seek justice without vengeance.

Justice and retribution are not the same. Saint Paul lists what justice looks like, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. 9) Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you" (Philippians 4:8-9).

7. Pray for difficult people.

Jesus tells His followers, "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).

Prayer not only changes circumstances, it also changes us and how we perceive other people.

8. Ask God to make you an instrument of peace.

Peacemaking is ultimately a spiritual exercise. Saint Francis of Assisi wrote, "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. / Where there is hatred, let me sow love; / where there is injury,

pardon; / where there is doubt, faith; / where there is despair, hope; / where there is darkness, light; / and where there is sadness, joy. / O divine Master, / grant that I may not so much seek / to be consoled as to console; / to be understood as to understand; / to be loved as to love. / For it is in giving that we receive; / it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; / and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life".

**Part fourteen Why Should I be a Peacemaker?**

1. I should be a peacemaker because unresolved conflict hinders my fellowship with God and stunts my spiritual growth.

"If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20).

"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; 24) Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift"(Matthew 5:23-24).

2. I should be a peacemaker because unresolved conflict impedes my own peace.

"Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (Romans 14:19).

3. I should be a peacemaker because

unresolved conflict hinders God from answering my prayers. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalm 66:18).

**Part Fifteen Portrait of a Peacemaker**

We have all been called to be peacemakers, "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18). "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

A true peacemaker develops certain qualities.
a) Humility

The ability to admit you may not have the whole story.

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14).

"Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud" (Proverbs 16:19).

"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:4)

b) Patience

The willingness to allow people time to process pain.

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9)

"He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly" (Proverbs 14:29).

c) Courage

The willingness to confront problems rather than hide from them.

"Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Deuteronomy 31:6).

"Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD" (Psalm 31:24).

d) Compassion

The ability to understand another person's pain.

Marita Bonner wrote, "She did not talk to people as if they were strange hard shells she had to crack open to get inside. She talked as if she were already in the shell. In their very

shell."

e) Wisdom

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever" (Psalm 111:10).

Wisdom is knowing when to speak, when to remain silent, and when to seek help.

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding" (Proverbs 9:10).

f) Forgiveness

The willingness to release personal revenge.

Jesus said, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12)

g) Love

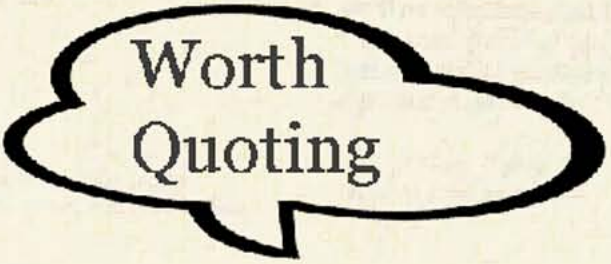
This is seeking the authentic good of others.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23) Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23).

These qualities do not come naturally to everyone but are formed through the work of God in us.

**Thought Questions**

1. "How can I become an instrument of God's




"The true teaching is to do good to enemies... Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

— Leo Tolstoy reinterpreting the Sermon on the Mount in "The Gospel in Brief", 1883

peace?"

2. "How can I help our home to know peace?"

3. "How can I help our church to experience reconciliation?"

4. "How can my workplaces understand kindness?"

5. "How can I live so that when people encounter us, may they see something of the character of our heavenly Father?".

6. "What can I do today to be a peacemakers?"

7. "Whom do I need to forgive?"

8. "Whom can I pray for that needs reconciliation?"

In conclusion, let us return to the words of Jesus, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."

Jesus did not say, "Blessed are those who always win arguments" nor "Blessed are those who dominate their opponents" nor "Blessed are those who avoid every difficult conversation" but "Blessed are the peacemakers."

Peacemaking requires empathy, compassion, courage, humility, patience, forgiveness, truth.,

possibly sacrifice, and always love, because peacemakers reflect the heart of God.

"Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen" (Romans 15:33) .

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# Chapter 10 "Persecuted Because of Righteousness"

(Matthew 5:10) "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Following Jesus Christ involves both privilege and sacrifice. This Beatitude reminds believers that living a righteous life may invite opposition, misunderstanding, and even persecution. Yet Jesus declares that those who remain faithful are truly blessed because they belong to God's Kingdom and will receive an eternal reward.

Most people naturally desire comfort, acceptance, and approval. We avoid rejection and criticism whenever possible. Yet Jesus teaches something unexpected: those who suffer because they live for God are blessed.

This Beatitude does not glorify suffering itself. Rather, it speaks of suffering that comes because of faithfulness to God and obedience to His will.

Throughout history, faithful believers have faced ridicule, rejection, imprisonment, discrimination, and even death because they chose to remain loyal to Christ. Jesus assures them and us that such suffering is not meaningless. God sees it, honours it, and

promises blessings in this life and an eternal reward.

### Part One What Is Persecution?

Saint Peter wrote, "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled" (1 Peter 3:14).

Persecution is suffering, opposition, cruelty, abuse, mistreatment, violence, neglect or exploitation because of faithfulness to God and His truth.

Persecution may include scoffing, ridicule or mockery, false accusations, social rejection, loss of opportunities or employment, discrimination, imprisonment, physical violence or even death.

Not every hardship is persecution. A person is not persecuted because of poor decisions, offensive behaviour, or wrongdoing.

Saint Peter reminds believers, "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. 16) Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" (1 Peter 4:15-16). The blessing belongs to those who suffer "for righteousness' sake".

### Part Two Why Are Righteous People Persecuted?

a) Because the world opposes God's truth

Jesus said, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you" (John 15:18). The world often resists God's standards because they expose sin and call for repentance.

Light reveals darkness, and people who prefer darkness may reject the light. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19). "But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light" (Ephesians 5:13). Yet there is hope: "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." (Romans 13:12)

b) Because righteous living challenges others. When believers live with honesty, purity, forgiveness, and integrity, their lives can make others uncomfortable. "When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8). A life shaped by Christ becomes a silent testimony that calls others to examine their own choices.

c) Because Satan opposes God's work. Scripture teaches that believers are engaged in spiritual warfare. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter

5:8). Whenever God's Kingdom advances, opposition often follows. The enemy seeks to discourage faithful servants through fear and suffering.

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12) For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. 13) Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14) Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; 15) And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16) Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. 17) And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: 18) Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Ephesians 6:11-18).

d) Because faithfulness requires courage. Standing for biblical truth may involve unpopular decisions. Choosing integrity over compromise can lead to criticism. Yet God calls His people to remain faithful regardless of the cost. "These things I have spoken unto you, that

in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

## Part Three Biblical Examples of Persecution

1. The Prophets. Many Old Testament prophets suffered for proclaiming God's message. Jeremiah was imprisoned, Elijah was hunted, and Zechariah was killed. Their faithfulness came at great personal cost.

2. Daniel remained faithful in Babylon. He refused to stop praying despite the king's decree and as a result, he was thrown into the lions' den. Yet God honoured his faithfulness and delivered him. "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt" (Daniel 6:22).

3. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to worship the golden image."If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. 18) But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." (Daniel 3:17-18). They were thrown into the fiery furnace. God did not abandon them. Instead, He was present with them in the fire. "Then Nebuchadnezzar the

king was astonied, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. 25) He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God" (Daniel 3:24-25). Their story reminds us that God's presence often becomes most evident during suffering.

4. Stephen became the first Christian martyr. Even while being stoned, he prayed for his persecutors, "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. 60) And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep"(Acts 7:59-60). His response reflected the mercy and forgiveness of Christ.

5. The Apostles, nearly all of them, suffered persecution. They were imprisoned, beaten, and rejected. Yet they continued preaching the Gospel with courage. "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts 5:41)

6. Jesus Christ, Himself, endured the greatest persecution. He was rejected, betrayed, mocked, beaten and crucified. Though innocent, He willingly suffered to bring

salvation to humanity. "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2). His example inspires believers to remain faithful under trial.

**Part Four Jesus' Teaching on Persecution**

Jesus never promised an easy life. Instead, He prepared His followers for opposition. He said, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Notice that Jesus combines realism with hope. He acknowledges suffering while assuring ultimate victory.

a) Rejoice in persecution. When Jesus says, "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad..." (Matthew 5:12), this does not mean we enjoy pain. Rather, we rejoice because God is with us, our faith is being strengthened, Our witness honours Christ. and an ETERNAL reward awaits.

b) Persecution is evidence of faithfulness. Jesus reminds His followers that the prophets experienced the same treatment. Faithful servants throughout history have often been misunderstood and opposed (See Hebrews 11). We stand in a long line of courageous witnesses. "Wherefore seeing we also are

compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us"(Hebrews 12:1).

## Part Five. How Should Christians Respond to Persecution?

1. Remain faithful. Do not abandon Christ because of opposition. Faithfulness brings glory to God.

2. Love Your Enemies. Jesus commands, "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; 45) That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. 46) For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? 47) And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? 48) Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:44-48). This is one of the clearest marks of Christian discipleship.

3. Pray for strength.. Prayer sustains believers during hardship. God gives wisdom, courage, and endurance.

4. Continue doing good. Do not allow

persecution to produce bitterness. Respond with kindness, honesty, and integrity. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21).

5. Encourage one another. Believers are called to support fellow Christians who suffer "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do" . (1 Thessalonians 5:11). "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13). "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. 8) He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (1 John 4:7-8). Prayer, practical assistance, and fellowship strengthen the body of Christ.

6. Trust God's justice. Not every injustice will be corrected in this life. God is the righteous Judge; He will vindicate His people in His perfect time.

**Part Six God's Promises to the Persecuted**

Jesus gives remarkable promises. "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Corinthians 1:20).

a) The Kingdom of Heaven. "...theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10). This echoes the first Beatitude, reminding us that

God's Kingdom belongs to those who humbly trust Him.

b) God's presence. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Isaiah 43:2). God does not always remove suffering, but He never abandons His people. Sometimes He calms the storm around us and other times he may calm us within the storm: "And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. 38) And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? 39) And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. 40) And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? 41) And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (Mark 4:37-41).

c) Eternal Reward. Jesus promises, "... theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:10. Earthly suffering is temporary and yet heavenly joy is eternal.

d) Spiritual growth. Trials deepen faith.

James writes that the testing of faith produces perseverance and maturity: "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience" (James 1:3). Even painful experiences can shape believers into the likeness of Christ.

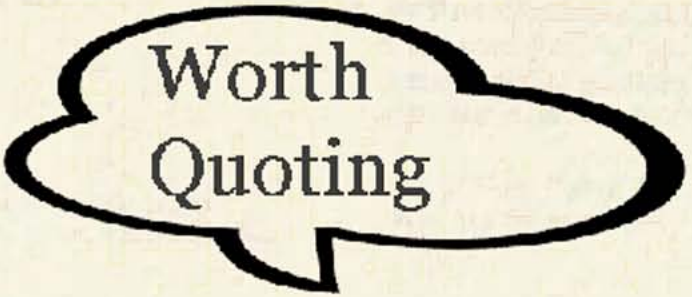
**Part Seven Living Faithfully in Today's World**

Many believers here in New Zealand today may not face imprisonment or physical violence, but they may experience ridicule for biblical convictions, pressure to compromise moral values, exclusion because of Christian beliefs, misunderstanding or false accusations and/or opposition for standing for truth with love.

How should we respond? We can stand firmly on God's word (The Holy Bible), speak truth with gentleness and respect, live with integrity, refuse hatred and revenge, pray for those who oppose us: "... pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you"(Matthew 5:44), Attend Mass to encourage and strengthen each other "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25) and keep our eyes fixed on Christ: "Looking unto Jesus" (Hebrews 12:2). Faithfulness in everyday life is a powerful testimony.

**Thought Questions**

1. Am I willing to stand for Christ even when it




The paradoxical nature of the Beatitudes by emphasizing that Christ's kingdom inverts worldly values: the poor in spirit and the lowly are elevated because "the lowliness of the sinner is the platform upon which God erects His kingdom of grace".

— Friedrich Wilhelm Krummacher (1796–1868)

is unpopular?

2. Have I ever compromised my faith to gain acceptance?

3. How do I respond when criticized for my beliefs?

4. Do I pray for those who oppose me?

5. Am I encouraging believers who are suffering?

6. Is my hope rooted in earthly approval or in God's eternal Kingdom?

In conclusion, persecution is not something Christians seek, but neither should they fear it when it comes because of faithfulness to Christ. This Beatitude reminds us that the Christian life is not measured by comfort but by faithfulness. Jesus never promised that His followers would avoid suffering. Instead, He promised His presence, His strength, His Kingdom, and an eternal reward.

Those who endure persecution because of righteousness are blessed, not because suffering is pleasant, but because their lives bear witness to the reality of God's Kingdom. Their perseverance reflects the character of Christ, who Himself suffered for the salvation of the world.

As believers, we are called to stand firm with humility, courage, and love. When we face opposition for doing what is right, we can remember that we walk the same path as the prophets, the apostles, and above all, our Lord Jesus Christ.

May we remain steadfast, trusting that God is with us in every trial and that nothing done in faithfulness to Him is never in vain. Saint Paul said, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

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# Chapter 11 When People Insult You Because of Christ

(Matthew 5:11) "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake."

Jesus teaches that those who suffer insults, persecution, and false accusations because they faithfully follow Him are truly blessed. Such suffering is not a sign of God's absence but often evidence of faithful discipleship. Christians are called to endure opposition with courage, love, and unwavering trust in God's promises.

This verse follows the Beatitude about persecution for righteousness' sake, but now Jesus makes it deeply personal. He changes from speaking generally ("Blessed are they...") to speaking directly ("Blessed are ye...").

Jesus knew that His followers would face rejection. He wanted them to understand that opposition because of their loyalty to Him should not surprise them or discourage them.

The Christian life is measured faithfulness not by fame.

**Part One The Context of Matthew 5:11**

Matthew 5:11, one of the Beatitudes, describe the character and blessings of God's people.

The Beatitudes begin with humility: the poor in spirit, those who mourn and the meek. They continue with spiritual growth: hunger for righteousness, mercy, purity and peacemaking.

Finally, Jesus speaks about persecution.

This order is significant because when believers live according to God's standards, they will often encounter resistance from a world that does not share those values.

Persecution is therefore presented not as an exception but as a possible consequence of faithful discipleship.

**Part Two Understanding Jesus' Words**

Jesus identifies three kinds of opposition.

1. Insults. To insult means to mock, ridicule, or verbally abuse someone. Examples include being scorned or laughed at for your faith, being called foolish, ignorant or juvenile because you believe the Bible, being rejected or excluded because of Christian convictions.

Although many believers experience verbal hostility rather than physical persecution, Jesus says they are blessed.

2. Persecution. Persecution includes intentional mistreatment because of faith. It may involve discrimination, loss of employment, imprisonment, physical violence, restrictions on worship, ostracism or social exclusion.

Many Christians around the world continue to experience severe persecution for following Christ.

3. False Accusations. Jesus also includes "shall say all manner of evil against you falsely". False accusations can damage reputations and relationships. Jesus Himself experienced this. He was falsely accused of breaking the law, blasphemy, deceiving the people and even being possessed by demons. Faithful believers may also face misunderstanding and false reports.

"... for my sake". Understanding these three words are essential. Jesus is not speaking about being blessed through suffering caused by personal mistakes, harsh behaviour, or poor decisions. The blessing applies when suffering comes because of faithfulness to Christ.

Saint Peter writes, "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" (1 Peter 4:16).

**Part Three Why Do Christians Face Opposition?**

a) The message of Christ challenges sin. The Gospel calls people to repentance. Not everyone welcomes that message. Light exposes darkness. Truth exposes error.

b) Christians belong to another kingdom. Believers follow Christ's values rather than the world's standards. This difference often creates

tension.

Jesus said, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19).

c) Satan Opposes God's work. Scripture teaches that believers are engaged in spiritual conflict. (Ephesians 6:11-18) "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12) For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. 13) Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14) Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; 15) And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16) Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. 17) And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: 18) Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;"

Opposition often increases when Christians

faithfully proclaim the Gospel and live according to God's Word.

d) Faithfulness Reveals God's Standards. Integrity, honesty, purity, forgiveness, and love stand in contrast to selfishness and injustice. Sometimes people react negatively because these qualities expose their own need for change.

**Part Four Biblical Examples**

1. Jesus Christ experienced: rejection by his hometown, betrayal by Judas, false witnesses, mockery by soldiers and finally crucifixion. Yet He remained faithful.

2. Saint Stephen boldly preached Christ however he was falsely accused and eventually stoned. Even in death, he prayed for those who killed him (See Acts 7:59-60)

3. Saint Paul experienced imprisonment, beatings, shipwrecks, rejection, false accusations and false imprisonment yet still he declared, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

4. Daniel's enemies could find no fault in him so they manipulated the law against his faithfulness to God. Daniel chose obedience to God over personal safety (See Daniel Chapter 6)

**Part Five How Should Christians Respond?**

a) Do not be surprised. Jesus warned His followers that persecution would come. Expecting opposition helps believers remain steadfast. The Spanish novelist Miguel de Cervantes wrote, "Hombre prevenido vale por dos; estar preparado es la mitad de la victoria." (Forewarned, forearmed; to be prepared is half the victory).

b) Remain faithful. Do not compromise biblical convictions simply to gain acceptance. Faithfulness matters more than popularity. "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2).

c) Love your enemies

Jesus commands believers to pray for those who persecute them. "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44 see also Luke 6:27). Christian love reaches even those who oppose us.

d) Speak with grace. "A soft answer turneth away wrath..." (Proverbs 15:1). Respond to insults without returning insults because gentle speech reflects the character of Christ.

e) Continue doing good. Do not stop serving God because of criticism. Let your life continue

to demonstrate Christ's love. "With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men" (Ephesians 6:7).

f) Trust God. Remember that God sees every act of faithfulness. Nothing done for Christ is ever forgotten. "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: 32) And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: 33) And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. 34) Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35) For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36) Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. 37) Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? 38) When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? 39) Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40) And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. 41) Then shall he say also

unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: 42) For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: 43) I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. 44) Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? 45) Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. 46) And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matthew 25:31-46).

**Part Six God's Promises to the Faithful**

a) God is with you. "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isaiah 41:10). "... I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:20). God never abandons His people.

b) Strength in difficult times. The Holy Spirit provides courage and wisdom when believers face opposition. "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; 17) Even the Spirit

of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. 18) I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (John 14:16-18)

c) Eternal reward.

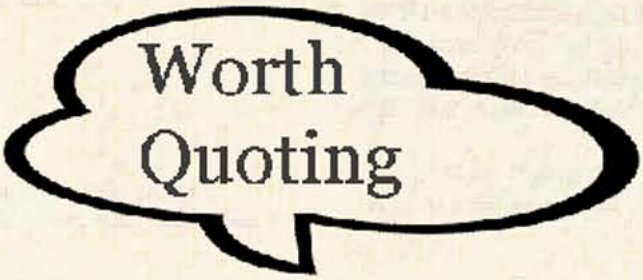
The very next verse after this Beatitude, Matthew 5:12, continues, "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven..." (Matthew 5:12). Earthly suffering is temporary whereas heavenly reward is eternal. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

d) Christ understands. Jesus personally experienced rejection. He sympathizes with those who suffer for His name therefore believers never suffer alone.

**Part Seven Living Matthew 5:11 Today**

Many Christians today may experience mockery for biblical beliefs, pressure to compromise moral convictions, exclusion because of faith, misrepresentation in the media and/or criticism for standing for truth with love. So how should we respond?

We can stay rooted in Scripture, , pray daily, worship faithfully being bold in attending Mass, support fellow believers, share the gospel




*"Le christianisme appelle bienheureux ceux qui pleurent, et donne la terre aux débonnaires; il a fondé la république des âmes sur la pitié et l'amour."*

(Christianity calls the weeping blessed, and gives the earth to the meek; it founded the republic of souls upon pity and love.)
— François-René de Chateaubriand
"Génie du christianisme"

Translated by the author with assistance from André le Blanc.

respectfully and live with humility and courage. Our witness often speaks loudest during difficult times.

**Thought Questions**

1. Am I willing to identify publicly as a follower of Christ?

2. Have I ever remained silent because I feared criticism?

3. How do I react when others mock my faith?

4. Do I pray for those who disagree with me?

5. Does my life consistently reflect the character of Jesus?

6. Am I seeking God's approval more than human approval?

Ask God for the courage to remain faithful in every circumstance.

In summary, Matthew 5:11 reminds us that following Jesus may bring opposition, but it also brings blessing. Jesus does not promise an easy path; He promises His presence, His strength, and His approval.

When believers are insulted, persecuted, or falsely accused because of Christ, they share in the experience of the prophets, the apostles,

and Jesus Himself. Such suffering is never wasted. God sees every sacrifice made for His name and promises an eternal reward.

Our calling is not to seek persecution, nor to respond with anger or resentment, but to remain faithful, to love our enemies, and to continue shining the light of Christ in a world that often resists it.

May we have the courage to stand firm in the Catholic faith, the humility to respond with grace, and the confidence that our hope is secure in Jesus Christ.

"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). And yet our labour in the Lord is never in vain.

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# Chapter 12 Great is Your Reward in Heaven

(Matthew 5:12) "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Jesus teaches that believers who suffer because of their faithfulness to God should respond with joy and hope because their suffering has eternal significance. The approval of God is greater than the approval of men and women, and the reward promised by heaven is greater than any temporary adversity on earth.

Matthew 5:12 is a continuation of Matthew 5:11, where Jesus speaks about insults, persecution, and false accusations that come because of loyalty to Him.

Jesus gives a surprising command, He says to rejoice.

Our fallen human nature tells us to avoid suffering. We normally seek comfort, acceptance, and security. Yet Jesus teaches that when suffering comes because of righteousness and faithfulness to Him, believers can have a deeper joy that circumstances cannot destroy.

This joy is not based on enjoying pain. It is based on knowing that God sees our faithfulness, our suffering has purpose, we

belong to a long line of faithful servants.and our eternal reward is secure.

**Part One The Context of Matthew 5:12**

As we have mentioned in previous chapters, the Beatitudes are part of the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus describes the character of citizens of God's Kingdom.

The Beatitudes reveal a different way of living: the humble receive God's Kingdom; those who mourn receive comfort; the meek inherit the earth; those who hunger for righteousness are satisfied; the merciful receive mercy; the pure in heart see God; the peacemakers are called God's children; and the persecuted receive the Kingdom of heaven. And so this final Beatitude focuses on those who suffer for Christ.

Jesus does not hide nor gloss over the cost of discipleship. Following Him brings blessings, but it may also bring opposition, resistance, antagonism, hostility and/or conflict.

**Part Two "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad"**

The command to rejoice is one of the most challenging parts of this verse. Jesus is not saying for us to enjoy suffering, ignore our pain, pretend that difficulties do not hurt nor refuse to seek justice. Instead, Jesus teaches believers to look beyond present circumstances and see God's eternal purpose.

Christian joy is different from happiness,

because happiness often depends on circumstances. When life is comfortable, we feel happy and when difficulties come, happiness disappears. However Christian joy is so much deeper because it is rooted in God's presence (Matthew 28:20), God's promises (2 Corinthians 1:20), God's faithfulness (Lamentations 3:22-23) and an eternal hope (Titus 1:2; 3:7).

A believer can experience sorrow and joy at the same time.

Saint Paul wrote, "As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (2 Corinthians 6:10).

Again he wrote, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice" (Philippians 4:4).

Joy Comes from knowing we belong to Christ. When Christians suffer for their faith, it confirms that they are identifying with Jesus. The world rejected Christ (John 1:10), yet God exalted Him (Philippians 2:9). The follower of Christ shares in His journey (Ephesians 5:1).

Jesus said, "... rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." (Luke 10:20).

**Part Three "Great is Your Reward in Heaven"**

Jesus directs attention from earthly suffering

to heavenly reward. Earthly difficulties are temporary; God's reward is eternal. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

God remembers faithfulness. People may forget sacrifices made for Christ, others may misunderstand, but God sees everything. "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister" (Hebrews 6:10). Every act of faithfulness matters to God.

The reward is greater than the cost. Jesus teaches that the glory of heaven outweighs the suffering of earth. Saint Paul expressed it this way, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17). The Christian does not suffer without hope.

Rewards are not about earning salvation. The reward Jesus speaks of is not a payment earned through human effort. Salvation is a gift from God. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). The reward represents God's gracious recognition of faithful obedience and endurance.

**Part Four "For so Persecuted They the**

**Prophets Which Were Before You."**

Jesus reminds His followers that they are not alone. The prophets before them experienced rejection because they faithfully delivered God's message.

a) Jeremiah preached God's truth but was rejected, mocked, and imprisoned. His faithfulness came with great personal cost.

b) Elijah stood against false worship and faced hostility from powerful leaders. He remained faithful despite opposition.

c) Amos spoke against injustice and corruption and because he challenged wrongdoing, he faced resistance.

d) From the prophets' example we learn that faithfulness may be costly, obedience matters more than popularity, and God honours those who stand for truth.

e) Jesus connects His followers with this great tradition of faithful witnesses and He, Himself, is the greatest example of faithful suffering because He experienced everything He described.

He was rejected, insulted, falsely accused, beaten, stabbed and crucified, yet He remained obedient to the Father.

Jesus endured suffering because He looked beyond the cross to the victory that followed.

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3) For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds" (Hebrews 12:2-3).

The cross appeared to be defeat, but God transformed it into victory.

The resurrection proves that suffering and death do not have the final word and this gives believers hope during trials.

f) "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: 33) Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34) Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35) Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: 36) And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: 37) They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted,

were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; 38) (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. 39) And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: 40) God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (Hebrews 11:32-40).

**Part Five How Should Christians Respond to Trials?**

1) Keep Your Eyes on God. Do not allow temporary struggles to distract you from eternal promises.

2) Remain Faithful. Do not abandon obedience because of pressure or criticism.. Faithfulness honours God. "His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:21 - also v. 23).

3) Respond with Love. Jesus calls believers to love enemies and pray for those who oppose them. "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).

4) Encourage Others. Those who suffer need

support from the Christian community. We are called to strengthen one another. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25).

5) Trust God's Timing. God sees every injustice and will bring perfect justice in His time. Saint Peter said, "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8).

**Part Six Practical Applications Today**

Matthew 5:12 is also addressed to modern believers. Christians may experience ridicule for their faith, pressure to compromise biblical values, misunderstanding because of Christian beliefs, social rejection, ostracism and/or criticism for standing for righteousness.

How should we respond?

a) Choose faithfulness over popularity. Human approval changes yet God's approval lasts forever.

b) Maintain a Christ-like attitude. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5).

c) Do not respond with anger or hatred. "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger" (Proverbs 15:1). "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your

# Your Notes

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